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THURSDAY 7 DECEMBER 1995

## Food giant may sue BBC in beef scare

Helpline linked Bovril to BSE

CHARLES ARTHUR  
Science Correspondent

The BBC may face legal action by the giant US corporation which produces Bovril, after a radio helpline advised callers concerned about BSE - mad cow disease - to avoid meat pies, sausages, beefburgers and beef stock.

The company, CPC, will today consider whether to sue the BBC. It said Bovril, which contains extract of boiled bones and carcasses, is produced from cattle raised in Argentina.

Officials at the Meat and Livestock Commission said beef sales had fallen by five per cent last month, compared with last year, and blamed fears that mad cow disease could be transmitted to humans.

Tests have been carried out after the death of a patient in Carlisle to establish if the cause could be Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD), the equivalent of mad cow disease in humans. The Director of Public Health for North Cumbria Health Authority said the patient died in the Cumberland Infirmary recently. The Government insists there is no evidence that BSE can be transmitted from cattle to humans.

Ian Ramsay, managing director of CPC UK Limited, accused the BBC helpline of "complete and utter irresponsibility", and lodged a complaint with the BBC's director-general, John Birt. Mr Ramsay said there was "categorically never" any problem with its product. CPC said that "Bovril" beef drink and stock products do not contain any of the materials that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and



Food has been banned. The beef product in any case is not of British origin. The BBC did not consult us on this matter."

Junior health minister Angela Browning told the BBC she was "very concerned" about the helpline's advice, which she says was given to members of her department when they phoned in after she appeared on the *You and Yours* programme last Friday. "In one of the answers, one of my officials was told, quite categorically, that certain meat products were suspect, and indeed it branded name of a product was also included ... I am very concerned that the consumer is being given this sort of advice by the BBC," she said.

The BBC said workers on the helpline, operated by an external company, were told to tell callers there was a debate on BSE, and the advice of the Government's chief medical officer was that beef products were safe, although some scientists believed there might be a risk.

A BBC spokeswoman said: "There was one incident when Colm Blakemore, page 18

one operator mistakenly used a brand name, Bovril, intending to mean the more generic term stock cubes as the kind of beef products some scientists believe may carry some risks." But the spokesman added that operators of helplines were always briefed not to use trade names. "We are investigating the situation," he said.

Scientists are increasingly critical of the Government's position. Colin Blakemore, the eminent neurophysiologist at Oxford University, said recent cases of the human equivalent of BSE in Britain "most definitely do not support [Health Secretary] Stephen Dorrell's statement earlier this week that there is 'no conceivable risk from eating beef.'" Shaw Heaphy, a senior research fellow at Leicester University, said: "There is a grand experiment going on in Britain with BSE, with us as the laboratory animals..." Both scientists say they have given up eating beef.

The Meat and Livestock Commission blamed public fears over BSE for part of the slide in beef sales, which follows a few months of marginal growth in the beef market.

Nevertheless, ministers went on the offensive yesterday to bolster beef's public image.

Agriculture Minister Douglas Hogg said it was "absolutely safe to eat and that parents should be encouraging children to eat it, while his Welsh counterpart Gwilym Jones, told Parliament: "I am more than content to go on eating beef on a regular basis."

He repeated that there was no scientific evidence of a link between BSE and its human equivalent.

Colm Blakemore, page 18

## First blast of winter brings snow chaos



All-white: Cyclists near Hovey Common, at Westerham, Kent, yesterday. Meanwhile, travellers using four wheels instead of two suffered lengthy delays on the roads, as the heavy snow and freezing temperatures combined to create 'nightmare' conditions

Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

## Iran backed plot to kill Arafat

PATRICK COCKBURN  
Jerusalem  
SAFA HAERI  
Paris

An attempt to kill Yasser Arafat was foiled when the leader of the militant Islamic Jihad organisation was assassinated by Israeli Mossad agents in Malta in October, a source with access to Iranian intelligence has told the *Independent*.

Patim Shkaki, the Jihad leader, had just attended a meeting in Tripoli, capital of Libya, with a senior Iranian envoy at which they discussed plans to assassinate the PLO chairman.

Islamic Jihad and Iran are both bitterly opposed to the peace agreement

between Israel and the PLO signed by the Palestinian leader.

The Iranian emissary who met Shkaki was Hussein Shalhoub, the deputy foreign minister for Arab affairs, says the source. Mr Shalhoub, who is also believed to be deputy head of Iranian intelligence, has been a leading hardliner in the Iranian government since he helped organise the takeover of the US embassy in Tehran in 1979.

Iranian intelligence believes the PLO gave Mossad, the Israeli foreign security organisation, details of Shkaki's itinerary and false passport, enabling them to arrange his assassination outside his hotel in Valletta on 26 October. Israel has not

claimed responsibility for the killing of Shkaki, but is widely believed to have been behind it.

Shkaki checked into room 616 of the Diplomat hotel in Valletta on the morning he was killed. He had shaved off his beard and was wearing a wig, but had no bodyguards. When he returned from a brief shopping trip he was met by two men on a motorcycle, one of whom shot him six times in the head.

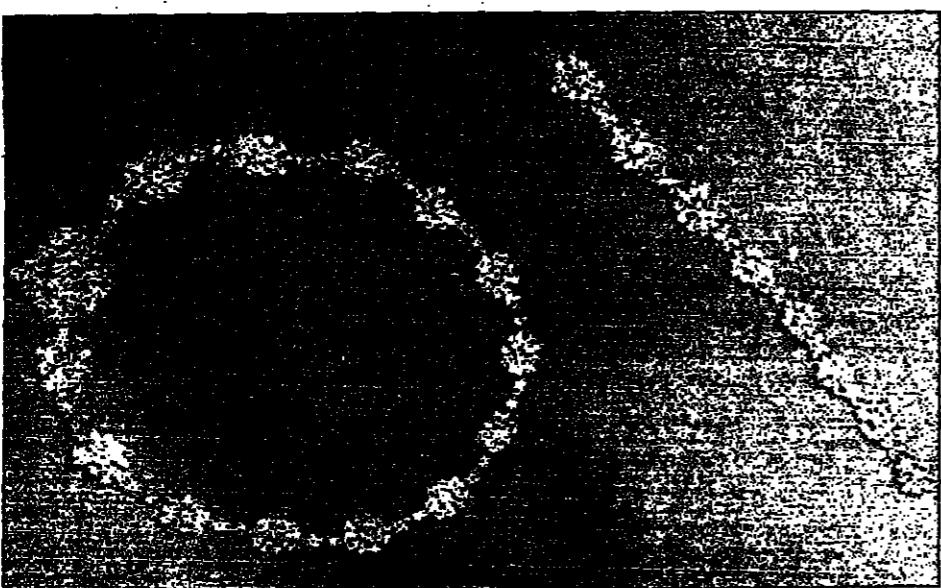
Relations between Mr Arafat and Iran, which is the main financial and political supporter of Islamic Jihad, have deteriorated sharply this year. Three months ago Mr Arafat attacked Iran, saying: "No matter how much money you provide to Jihad, you will never succeed in



Arafat: Saved by Israeli killing of Jihad chief

Murder foiled, page 13

## Baggage handler caught with Duchess's gems



The jewellery, believed to be worth £250,000, after it was found in a garden shed

DAVID USBORNE  
New York

A baggage handler at New York's Kennedy Airport appeared in court yesterday on theft charges after the Duchess of York's jewellery was found in a garden shed.

The Federal Bureau of Investigations confirmed that both the lost items, a bracelet and a necklace, believed to be worth £250,000 and given to the Duchess by the Queen as a wedding present, had been retrieved. Five small diamonds were found missing from the necklace, however.

Gilbert Tererro, 19, an employee of Hudson General company, the baggage handling agent for British Airways at Kennedy Airport, was charged with "theft from an interstate shipment". He could face a maximum 10 years in jail

way the bag had been passed around and then stowed. "I would not put something of that value in the hold," suggested James Kallstrom, an assistant director with the FBI. John Lampi, New York spokesman for BA, concurred: "Knowing the kind of value involved, it probably should have been taken on as carry-on baggage."

Once checked in by the lady-in-waiting, the small bag was the last to enter the jumbo-jet's hold before departure. Mr Lampi said it posed an easy temptation, because it was a zip-up bag with only one lock.

The Hudson Company, he added, would have to "look very carefully" about who it was hiring if it expected to keep its contract with the airline.

The FBI said it was continuing the search for the missing five diamonds and was confident they would be found.

We could have named it after a monk's habit but the RSPCA would have been onto us like a shot.



THE SERIOUS BEER WITH THE SILLY NAME

## 150 accountants face ruin over clanger

JOHN WILLCOCK  
Financial Correspondent

Nearly 150 chartered accountants face personal bankruptcy following a record damages award in the High Court yesterday worth £105m including interest and costs.

Each of the partners in Binder Hamlyn affected by the judgment are personally liable for around a quarter of a million pounds each. Binder's said yesterday it will "vigorously appeal against the award".

ADT, an electronic security company, won the damages

against Binder's - believed to be the biggest ever in the UK against an accountancy firm - after a judge criticised crucial information the firm volunteered during a takeover bid five years ago.

Jonathan Sumption, QC, representing Binder's, told Mr Justice May that his client's insurance cover fell short of the total £105m damages and interest of £34m. Legal sources said this would mean that all the partners that had worked at Binder's since 1990, when the deal took place, were now liable for the shortfall.

ADT first brought the claim in August 1992. Sources close to the firm said that the total number of partners liable was unclear because of retirements and deaths, but was probably between 130 and 150.

Most of Binder's was bought last year by giant US rival Arthur Andersen but legal sources said that it would not be liable.

However, the award is likely to please Michael Ashcroft, the entrepreneur who built ADT in the 1980s through a series of audacious acquisitions which alienated the City.

Mr Sumption successfully applied to the judge for a hearing to ask for a stay of settlement until an appeal is heard.

Legal sources expect any appeal to take up to a year.

Binder's had signed off an audit for October 1989 for Britannia Securities Group, target of a takeover bid, which confirmed to ADT that Binder's stood by the audit. ADT then spent £105m buying Britannia.

The judge found that the accountants had been negligent in their audit of the company and its subsidiaries and it was worth only £40m. He awarded bidder

Running for cover, page 25



### IN BRIEF

999 only in Essex

Industrial action by firefighters on Merseyside is poised to spread to the South-east after union members in Essex voted to ban all but emergency calls on two days.

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Profit from disabled

Six banks running a car-leasing company for a disabled charity have allegedly made "unjustified" profits.

Page 2

Galileo mission

Scientists will learn tonight whether the Galileo space mission to Jupiter has completed the most perilous stage of its 2.3 billion-mile journey.

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## Snowbound England: Four die as wintry blast causes danger for motorists and leaves the south at a standstill Icy 'nightmare' brings trail of chaos

PETER VICTOR

Drivers were warned to brace themselves for more winter tailbacks today, as snow and ice continues to leave a trail of chaos across England. Four people are thought to have died after skidding out of control and scores of motorists spent nearly 24 hours trapped in an M25 service station after a section of the motorway was cut off in icy blizzards.

Motorway organisations spoke of 'nightmare' conditions on snowbound and icy roads. The Siberian blast sweeping much of the country is expected to last until the weekend, when the frosts will begin to thaw.

Worst affected yesterday were Kent and Surrey, with the M25 severely hit by snow on a stretch straddling both counties between junctions five and six. The section was closed in-

temittently throughout the morning as police tried to avoid a recurrence of Tuesday night's 37-mile logjam from mid-Surrey to the Dartford tunnel.

Even gritting lorries were stuck in the snow as they tried to dodge their way along carriageways littered with abandoned cars, the RAC said.

In Nottinghamshire, police were investigating whether snow was partly responsible for a crash in which a father and his two children died. Glyn Palmer, 37, was driving his Nissan Micra car with his 10-year-old son, Darren, in the front seat and his daughter, Paula-Marie, eight, in the back seat when they were in a crash with an articulated lorry on the A6097 near Oxtorpe, Nottinghamshire.

One woman driver died and her husband was seriously injured when their car skidded off the A40 trunk road at Carmarthen and crashed into road signs in the early hours.

Hundreds of trapped travellers spent nearly 24 hours at Clacket Lane Service Station on the M25. And despite the massive police and rescue ser-



Stranded: White motorists sit gridlocked on the M25, a lorry lies abandoned on the hard shoulder of the closed anti-clockwise carriageway

Photograph: Steve Reigate

vice operation to clear the orbital between Caterham, Surrey (junction 6) and Sevenoaks, Kent (junction 5), many motorists were still stuck yesterday.

An RAC spokesman said: "There are still terrible problems. There is heavy snow falling in the area and conditions are worsening. We are ex-

pecting severe falls across the south-east and we are calling in extra staff to cope."

Rayner Poer of the AA said: "Traffic is a nightmare at the moment. Our advice is to try and stagger journeys, take extra time and speak to your boss nicely to allow you to leave work a little bit earlier." Drivers

should also keep extra warm clothing and a blanket in the car and take a vacuum flask.

A London Weather Centre spokesman warned more snow was forecast for last night in the south-eastern quarter of Britain, particularly East Anglia, Essex and Kent. A fresh band of snow is expected to arrive

from the Continent and spread westwards to central counties of England. Parts of Norfolk and Suffolk can expect a covering of three to four centimetres, he said.

Today the wind is expected to shift to a more south-easterly direction and southern counties, especially Devon, Dorset, Wil-

shire and Avon, can expect snow. But the air flow would become more southerly by Friday and a thaw was expected to set in by the weekend.

For the second day running yesterday bookmakers slashed odds against a white Christmas. Ladbrokes cut their price to 2-1 after a rush of bets on yes-

terday morning's quoted odds of 5-1. Spokesman Paul Austin said: "As soon as our customers can't feel their fingers and toes they start betting heavily on a white Christmas."

William Hill cut their odds from 7-1 to 5-1 and are bracing themselves for a £100,000 payout if it snows on December 25.

## Experts try to quell fears over rising meningitis toll

JAMES CUSICK

Infectious diseases experts yesterday told anxious parents not to panic over the number of meningitis cases in recent months, which may be evidence of an "early winter peak" of the seasonal disease.

Yesterday the confirmation of further meningitis cases in Cleveland and Nottinghamshire were likely to add to parents' increasing anxiety over their children's health. However, the Communicable Diseases Surveillance Centre, part of the Public Health Laboratory, said panic was "unwarranted" and that case levels "were within their expectations" for this time of the year.

A spokeswoman for the PHL said: "We are just recording some 2,000 cases each year. That equates to six cases every day." The centre said figures for the first 10 months of the year were roughly in the expected ranges seen over the last five years. Only a marginal increase in October's figures indicated the disease, most common in winter months, may have peaked ahead of the high nor-



Pupils are being kept away from Pallister Park School

mally expected in January or February.

More cases of meningitis – to add to those recently reported in Lincolnshire, West Yorkshire, Leeds, Glasgow and London – were confirmed yesterday. It was disclosed that a second youngster had died, and six others were ill, in the latest addition to the cluster of cases to hit the north-east.

Four-year-old Reece McCaw, a pupil at Pallister Park Primary School in Middlesbrough, Cleveland, died last Friday. The second victim is a

16-year-old from County Durham.

Three other confirmed cases have also been recorded in the same county. The patients include a two-year-old from Peterlee and a four-year-old from Crook who attends a local nursery. A pupil from Parkview Comprehensive, and a 17-year-old student attending New College, Durham, are two confirmed cases from Chester-le-Street. A 12-year-old from Bishopsgate near Darlington is also one of the new cases.

Cleveland Education De-

partment is now hoping that their public reassurances, given after the death of Reece McCaw, will stop pupils being kept away from school by worried parents.

In north Nottinghamshire, a 16-year-old girl from Rufford School, Edwinstowe, has been diagnosed as suffering from meningitis. A five-year-old from Mansfield, has already received treatment for the disease.

Simon Kroll, Professor of Paediatrics at St Mary's Hospital, London, one of the UK's leading centres for the study of meningococcal disease, said:

"Using the word 'outbreak' to describe what we are seeing is making a mistake. It is imprecise and has emotional overtones."

Most of the population acquire some immunity to the disease during childhood. However, in young children there is an increased risk. Adolescents also experience a slightly increased risk. The disease is classified as 'seasonal' with normal peaks expected in the winter. Prof Kroll said "clusters" of the disease were part of its normal behaviour.

MARIANNE MACDONALD

Media Correspondent

Andrew Neil, the combative former editor of the *Sunday Times*, has landed a major BBC chat show a year after his planned American prime time programme failed to materialise.

Uniquely, *The Andrew Neil Show* will be broadcast live both on BBC2 and on BBC World, the BBC's international information channel, which is said to be available in 49 million homes in 111 countries.

The show will start at 2.10pm on BBC2, when Mr Neil will interview a person involved in the big story of the day. From 2.30pm it will also go out on BBC World, with an interviewee of more global interest.

Viewers will be encouraged to "interact" with the show by sending in questions by e-mail, fax, phone or on the Internet. These will flash up on a computer in front of Mr Neil.

The former editor, who is

presenting a second series of *Is This Your Life?* on Channel 4, said he was delighted to have clinched the show to run three times a week from 9 January. But he emphasised: "This is not

a political show. We have to cover everything. I always see things in *Sunday Times* section terms, and I will cover everything from the style section to the news review."

He said the interviewees he would have asked to appear on the show yesterday were Jane Dunn-Butler, the luckless lady-in-waiting who mislaid the Duchess of York's diamonds; Julia Somerville, who has been cleared of wrong-doing over the photographs of her seven-year-old daughter; and the Duchess of York. For the global interview slot he would be looking for figures such as Jacques Chirac, the French president, James Hewitt, the former lover of the Princess of Wales, and Henry Kissinger.

Although the show is on daytime television, the 13-week contract is a prestigious one for Mr Neil, who has become a familiar face on television. Last Sunday he got the upper hand of Mrs Merton on her show, but in August he was criticised in a *Times* review of *Is This Your Life?* for over-aggression.

"Cackling, Neil cracks the handle while flimsy celebrities such as Olivia Newton-John squeal, creak and dismember," it said.

Neil left Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation in November last year after a plan for him to front a high-profile current affairs show on Fox, the US national television network, broke down. Since then he has pursued a lucrative career as a freelance writer and broadcaster. He is also leading a consortium which has bid around £250m for the Express newspaper group, although it seems unlikely that its owner, Lord Stevens, will wish to sell.

Mr Sheridan painted a bleak picture of the Ashby family, apparently torn apart by greed over the family business.

When Mr Sheridan, Brian's partner for 25 years, was asked if Mr Ashby was a homosexual he said he did not know.

"Englishmen are usually very refined, they have a little bit more of a gentle touch to them," he said. "It wouldn't surprise me if every Englishman was gay."

The case continues.

Cellnet and Vodafone think Saturday should be peak rate on their business tariffs,

Orange think the whole weekend should be off-peak.

Another reason why, on average, Orange users save £20 every month.





# Cancer treatment blamed for injuries

LIZ HUNT  
Health Editor

Hundreds of breast cancer patients permanently damaged by radiation treatment have received a major boost to their claims for compensation from the Government.

The women, left with severe pain and paralysis of an arm due to nerve damage, learned that their injuries were due to excessive doses of radiation, inappropriately delivered during treatment.

A report from the Royal College of Radiologists has confirmed that the most likely explanation for the condition, known as brachial plexus neuropathy (BPN), was the physical movement of patients between radiotherapy treatment to the breast and radiotherapy to the lymph nodes in the lower neck and armpit. High doses were a secondary cause.

She was treated for breast cancer at the Royal Marsden Hospital, London, in 1980 at the age of 50. Two years later she began suffering pain and paralysis in her left arm. Now she is in constant pain, and bone tissue in her collar bone and some of her ribs has been destroyed.

"The report confirms the worst fears of several hundred women. We all suspected the cause. This is enormously helpful to our quest for compensation from the Government," Lady Ironside said.

Two leading radiologists reviewed the records of 126 members of Rage Breast (for women who have been treated for breast cancer), and BPN due to radiotherapy was found in 48 women treated between 1980 and 1993 at 15 of 51 cancer centres in England and Wales.

## A new ballet waits in the wings



On their toes: The Royal Ballet dancers Stuart Cassidy, Deborah Bull and Darcey Bussell at rehearsals for *Mr Worldy Wise*, by the American choreographer Twyla Tharp, which has its world premiere at Covent Garden on Saturday. Tickets have been cut from £65 to £27.50 and the cheapest are just £2

Photograph: Lawrie Lewis

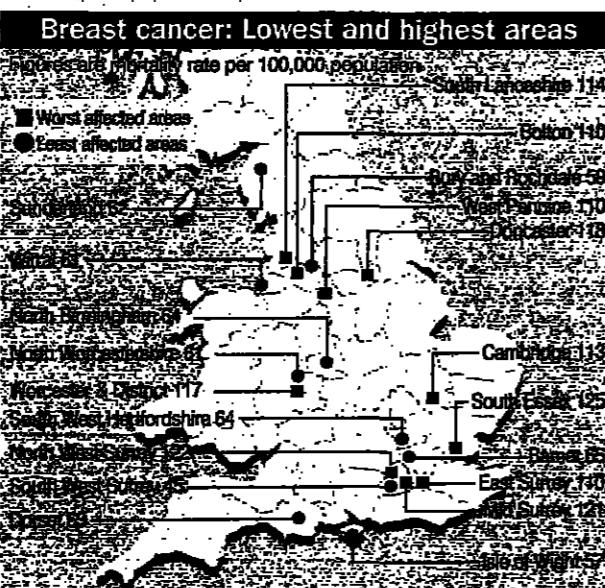
## Survival 'is lottery' for women

GLENDY COOPER

Women are victims of a "shameful" health lottery with 60 per cent of district health authorities likely to fail the Government's targets for reducing breast cancer deaths by 2000, the Labour Party claimed yesterday.

Variations in mortality rates between districts can differ by as much as 170 per cent and three out of eight regional health authorities are also unlikely to meet the Government's target of a 25 per cent reduction in breast cancer deaths between 1990 and 2000.

Breast cancer killed almost 14,000 women in the UK in 1992. It is responsible for about 20 per cent of cancer deaths and 5 per cent of all deaths in women. In an area of average breast cancer mortality, the disease will affect 1 in every 1,163 of the population, the report showed. But in the worst area this rises to 1 in 800 and in the best area it decreases to 1 in 2,222. The average rate of



mortality was 86 per 100,000 population. A total of 55 district health authorities fall on or above the average. The other 57 fall below. South Essex was identified as the English authority with the highest mortality rate - 123 deaths per 100,000 population. At the other end of the scale, South West Surrey, with the lowest rate, had 45 deaths per

100,000 - a difference of 170 per cent. Three authorities - South Essex, North West Surrey, and Mid Surrey - had death rates almost 30 per cent higher than average, it was claimed.

According to Labour's figures, the five district health authorities with the worst record are: South Essex (125 deaths per 100,000 population), North West Surrey (122), Mid Surrey (121), Doncaster (118), Worcester and District (117). Areas with the best records include South West Surrey, Isle of Wight, Bury and Rochdale, North Worcestershire and the Wirral.

Of the 112 authorities, 45 were on course to meet the Government's target of a 25 per cent reduction and 13 were making progress. But 54 looked likely to miss the target.

Labour said its findings flew in the face of government claims about breast cancer. It quoted from a *Health of the Nation* report which said there was "relatively little variation" in mortality around the England and Wales average.

ENTERTAINMENT'S NOT  
REALLY MY STRONG POINT.

Trivial Pursuit

it takes all sorts

## news

# Examiners limit calculator use in school maths tests

JUDITH JUDD  
Education Editor

Government exam advisers yesterday announced a clampdown on the use of calculators in national tests because of fears that they are lowering standards.

From next year calculators will be barred from one of two maths papers in tests for 600,000 11-year-olds. Officials are also considering banning them from one of the maths papers taken by 14-year-olds.

In maths, say reports on this year's tests, 14-year-olds did well at simple mental arithmetic and using simple fractions and percentages. However, they had difficulty with two-digit divisions without calculators and with questions needing mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills.

One in 10 could not multiply 840 by 63 and one in five could not divide 1.24 metres by 14 centimetres.

Dr Nick Tate, chief executive

of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority which published the reports, said:

"There are vital parts of maths which can only be taught without ready access to calculators. The move to calculator-free papers will signal more strongly to schools the importance of thinking very carefully indeed about the way they use calculators. The overuse of calculators can be damaging."

At present pupils are allowed calculators in all maths papers and those questions in which calculators must not be used are indicated.

Dr Tate said pupils found that confusing. It was also difficult to police when calculators were being used.

The authority has commissioned an international survey to examine how calculators are used in other countries. A report from Her Majesty's Inspectors suggested recently that calculators are used much more widely in British primary schools than abroad.

## North and south of spelling

Cockneys spell it mof and Lancastrians spell it moth. If you are seven, it makes sense to spell how you talk.

Reports on this year's national tests for seven-year-olds show that regional accents are one of the obstacles to improving the nation's spelling.

Sixteen per cent spelt moth as mof and 14 per cent wrote minkin instead of thinking. Both was spelt with both short and long vowels and sometimes written beff.

Children had difficulty with words where more than one letter represented the vowel. Only one in five could spell scream

correctly. They also applied rules they had learned about sounds to words where they did not apply: bread for bread, nos for nose, fens for fence.

Consonants caused difficulty in words where they are not pronounced, such as knows. The reports on this year's tests say pupils know the rules of spelling but they tend to apply them wrongly and to forget exceptions.

In tests for 11-year-olds, some pupils failed to spell top and press correctly. Most mistakes were made in the spelling of the words apprehensive and occurred.

# Cheesemaker victorious in listeria battle

JOHN ARLIDGE  
Scotland Correspondent

One of Britain's leading cheesemakers, Humphrey Errington, was celebrating victory last night after a bitter year-long battle to protect the good name of his Lanark Blue cheese.

More than one tonne of Lanark Blue, worth more than £60,000, was condemned as unfit for human consumption last year after council hygiene officials found traces of listeria in the cheese. Environmental health officers tried to raid Mr Errington's dairy and destroy 44 batches of the gourmet product.

But in a heated confrontation, Mr Errington, 50, refused to allow them on to his land. He insisted the listeria was "natural and harmless" and began a legal battle against the council.

Yesterday he secured victory when a sheriff sitting in Lanark, 15 miles east of Glasgow, ruled that the cheese was safe. Sheriff John Douglas Allan said: "It does not appear to me upon the evidence that the Lanark Blue cheese failed to comply with food safety requirements. The cheese is not likely to be injurious to health." Dismissing earlier rulings that it should be

destroyed, he said some 63,000 portions had been consumed in 1994 without illness.

Sheriff Allan went on to criticise Clydesdale council's environmental health department for using flawed techniques. So-called experts were ill-informed and had been dogmatic and unduly rigid, he said. He "deplored" the council's "combative and confrontational" attack on Mr Errington.

Mr Errington, who raised thousands of pounds from sympathisers in his campaign to protect cheeses like Lanark Blue, which is made from unpasteurised milk, celebrated last night by holding a party with his seven staff at his dairy at Dunyside in Lanarkshire.

He said the judgment would "send shock waves through all regulatory authorities ... This is a tremendous victory for traditional food makers."

Mr Errington is now planning to sue the council for damages. "I am considering a complaint to the ombudsman, alleging maladministration by Clydesdale council and possibly asking the Audit Commission to surcharge councillors for their behaviour." The council faces legal bills of nearly £200,000.

## DAILY POEM

### Song of Contrariety

By Robert Graves

Far away is close at hand,  
Close at hand is far away,  
Love shall come at your command  
Yet will not stay.

At summons of your dream-despair  
She might not obey,  
But slid close down beside you there,  
And complaisant lay.

Yet now her flesh and blood consent  
In the hours of day,  
Joy and passion both are spent,  
Twining clean away.

Is the person empty air,  
Is the sceptre clay,  
That love, tenst substance by despair,  
Wanes and leaves you lonely there  
On the bridal day?

In the centenary year of Robert Graves's birth, Carcanet Press have recently published the first volume (1910-26) of his *Complete Poems*, with the second volume to follow in 1996. By 1926, when he was 31, Graves had produced 19 books, of which 11 were of verse. This poem, typical of the rhythmic ballad form which Graves employed in his early work, first appeared in *Whipping-Cord* (1923). He was yet to meet the American poet Laura Riding with whom he was to have a long affair and whose influence was to change the style and direction of his poetry. Graves died on 7 December 1958.



Holy image: 'The Finding of Moses' by the Italian old master, Orazio Gentileschi, which sold for £5m at Sotheby's in London yesterday. The oil painting, which was commissioned by Charles I and painted between 1633-4, and was bought by a private collector. Photograph: Geraint Lewis

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• VHS-U

# Judge adjourns to new year to ease pressure on jurors

JOHN WILLCOCK  
Financial Correspondent

The Maxwell trial came to an unexpected halt yesterday when jurors told the judge they would feel under pressure if they were sent out to consider their verdicts before Christmas.

So, instead of summing up and sending the jury out next week, as he had intended, Lord Justice Phillips adjourned the trial, now in its seventh month, until the new year.

He told the seven women and five men that he did not want them to feel under any pressure and he said their request had shown "some wisdom".

He told them: "All that remains is to wish you a very happy Christmas, and they left court for the extended break.

On Tuesday the judge had told the jury he planned to begin summing up next Monday and hoped to finish at the end of the week, when the jury would then be sent to consider their verdicts, spending the night at a hotel. If the jurors had



Day 116

not agreed verdicts by 22 December, the judge said, they would be allowed home to celebrate Christmas and would return to resume their deliberations on 27 December.

The judge assured the jury that "at this stage of the trial, and indeed throughout, you are the most important people. I am not going to send you out to consider verdicts if you are going to feel under pressure".

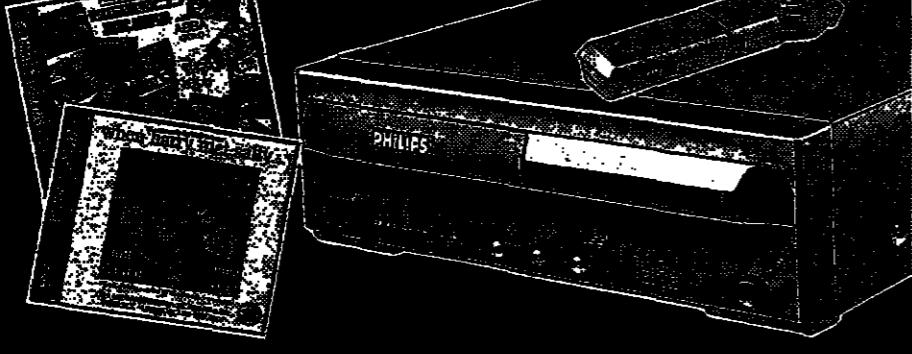
The jury sent the judge another note saying they did not want any break from when he began his summing up until they had reached verdicts.

The judge adjourned the court until 3 January, when he would begin summing up.

Kevin Maxwell, his brother Ian, and the former Maxwell executive Larry Trachtenberg deny conspiracy to defraud by misusing shares belonging to the pension fund.

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## politics

# Labour set to tackle football hooligans

JOHN RENTOU and COLIN BROWN

A Labour government would crack down on British football hooligans abroad by discouraging other European Union countries from simply rounding up troublemakers and innocent supporters together and shipping them all back.

In a "Football Charter" to be launched today, Labour will propose a Europe-wide register of violent supporters and call for EU police forces to prosecute repeat offenders. The aim is to stop thugs travelling abroad, getting thrown out and then doing it again - copying the success of British authorities in excluding persistent offenders from grounds.

The charter accepts that domestic football violence has been much reduced, but says more can be done on the home front as well. It says a Labour government would "aid the progressive transfer to well-trained stewards" of many functions carried out by the police, thus freeing police resources for intelligence work and cutting the costs of policing to clubs.

A Labour source said: "We

would also want to look at the consistency of financial charges imposed by the police for policing matches - some of the fees are driving the smaller clubs to bankruptcy."

The Football Charter, which follows an Anglers' Charter, is part of the party's populist drive to identify with mass culture. Jack Cunningham, Labour's national heritage spokesman, is also expected to write to the Government shortly outlining his concern about Sky Television's purchase of the rights to the first, second and third divisions of the Football League.

The issue is controversial because Labour hopes to neutralise the anti-Labour propaganda in newspapers owned by Rupert Murdoch. But many Labour MPs are critical of the Sky football deal because it means their constituents cannot see live English league football without owning a satellite dish.

There is also concern about the allegations of anti-competitive practices being made against the Murdoch empire by cable television companies. Mr Cunningham said: "We are approaching this issue from the point of view of ownership and

broadcasting, not on the basis of any one individual or any one organisation."

The main theme of the charter is supporters' rights, and it promises to give genuine football supporters a say over the future of the sport for the first time - provided their representative bodies can "get their act together". The two main supporters' bodies, the Federation of Football Supporters' Clubs and the Football Supporters Association, would have to combine, the source said.

Tom Pendry, Labour's sports spokesman, is expected to announce today that in government Labour would set up a "task force" of representatives of spectators, players and clubs to look at a range of issues, including "bungs", laws against ticket touts and the way the sport's ruling body is run.

Labour sources claim already to have put pressure on the Football Association to streamline its decision-making. Last month the FA's chief executive, Graham Kelly, failed with a plan to delegate the powers of the organisation's 90-plus councilors to an executive committee of between 10 and 15.



Battleground: Labour's 'Football Charter' targets violent fans and aims to give genuine supporters a bigger say

## Blair to take 'education crusade' to the country

DONALD MACINTYRE  
Political Editor

Tony Blair is to hold an unprecedented series of open public meetings for teachers and parents next year to secure backing for Labour's planned crackdown on bad schools and teachers.

Mr Blair told a CBI London Region dinner that he and

nounced last night that he intended to take to the road "in a crusade for standards", which party officials said was designed to prove that the adverse and highly publicised reaction of teachers' unions was not representative of the majority views of individual teachers.

The meetings - similar in concept to the campaign Mr

David Blunkett, his education spokesman, was holding a series of meetings for teachers and parents "of all political persuasions" next year and added: "We are mounting a crusade for standards and I want parents and teachers to feel a part of it."

The meetings - similar in concept to the campaign Mr

Blair conducted among party members to secure backing for a new Clause IV - will be conducted on an "everyone welcome" basis, Mr Blair said.

At the same time he sought to rebuff Tory attacks on the 10-strong Labour Commons rebellion over income tax on Tuesday night by saying that the size of that rebellion "far from

portending trouble in government, firmly underlines where the centre of gravity in our party now lies and the direction in which the party is moving."

He added: "Not long ago there would have been a natural knee-jerk desire to vote against any cut in income tax... But no more. There is a very clear understanding that high tax should

not be equated with a high success economy."

Mr Blair prefaced his

remarks on the rebellion, which included former Treasury minister Denis Davies, "by knocking down the most common concern that is raised with me. It goes something like this. 'You're all right Mr Blair but we are not

so sure about the rest of the party. We are not so sure that you can take them with you in government.'"

The rebellion - smaller than on Europe and defence estimates in the past - and the publication of Labour's new schools standards document "provided two very important indications of the extent to which the party has changed".

A Bill to make it an offence to inflict cruelty on foxes, squirrels and other wild animals is to be revived today by a Labour MP, writes Colin Brown.

The Wild Mammals Protection Bill, which was killed in the Lords in the last session of Parliament, is expected to be taken up again today by Alan Meale, MP for Mansfield. The Bill is likely to disappoint the League Against Cruel Sports because it will not seek to ban fox hunting, stag hunting or hare coursing. But the sponsors have limited its scope to enhance its chances of becoming law.

A similar Bill aroused controversy when it was launched a year ago because it would have banned all forms of hunting with hounds and its sponsor, John McFall, was forced to abandon the anti-hunting clauses. It ran into more opposition in the House of Lords and was finally killed through lack of parliamentary time, although it had passed all its Commons stages.

Mr Meale came second in the ballot of MPs for the right to introduce a backbench Bill and is guaranteed a full day for debate in January. The Bill would make it an offence for the first time to kick, beat, impale, crush or drown wild animals.

The Bill has the backing of the RSPCA. "It would give wild animals the same protection that the 1911 Protection of Animals Act gives captive animals," it said. "At the moment there is no legal protection for wild mammals unless they are a protected species."

## Dobson homes in on asbestos row

CHRIS BLACKHURST  
Westminster Correspondent

The Director of Public Prosecutions has been asked to order a police investigation into homeless families being moved into asbestos-ridden flats by Westminster council.

Frank Dobson, Labour's environment spokesman, said he had also written to the Health and Safety Executive to see if prosecutions should be brought.

New evidence last week showed how the council's for-

mer Tory leaders filled two blocks of flats in a solid Labour ward in Paddington with homeless families rather than move them to key marginal wards elsewhere in the borough.

Mr Dobson drew parallels with the long-running "homes for votes" inquiry, also involving Westminster, which is being conducted by John Major, the district auditor, as it focuses on the council's policy of "decent deal" where homes were sold cheaply to likely Tory voters. Mr Dobson said:

"It is my view that before the asbestos scandal arose, Westminster had dragged London politics into the gutter - they have now got it down into the septic tank."

He told MPs in the Commons: "There is no excuse for anyone knowingly endangering the lives of other people's families. This is what they did. It has become clearer and clearer that this council knowingly moved homeless families into blocks known to be dangerously riddled with asbestos."

Mr Dobson also demanded the Government obtain a copy of a report being prepared for the current Westminster council by John Barratt, former chief executive of Cambridgeshire council, and make it available to Parliament.

Labour also went on the offensive on another aspect of Westminster, asking the Government to explain why it has vetoed the council being included in an official survey of local authorities' complaints procedures.

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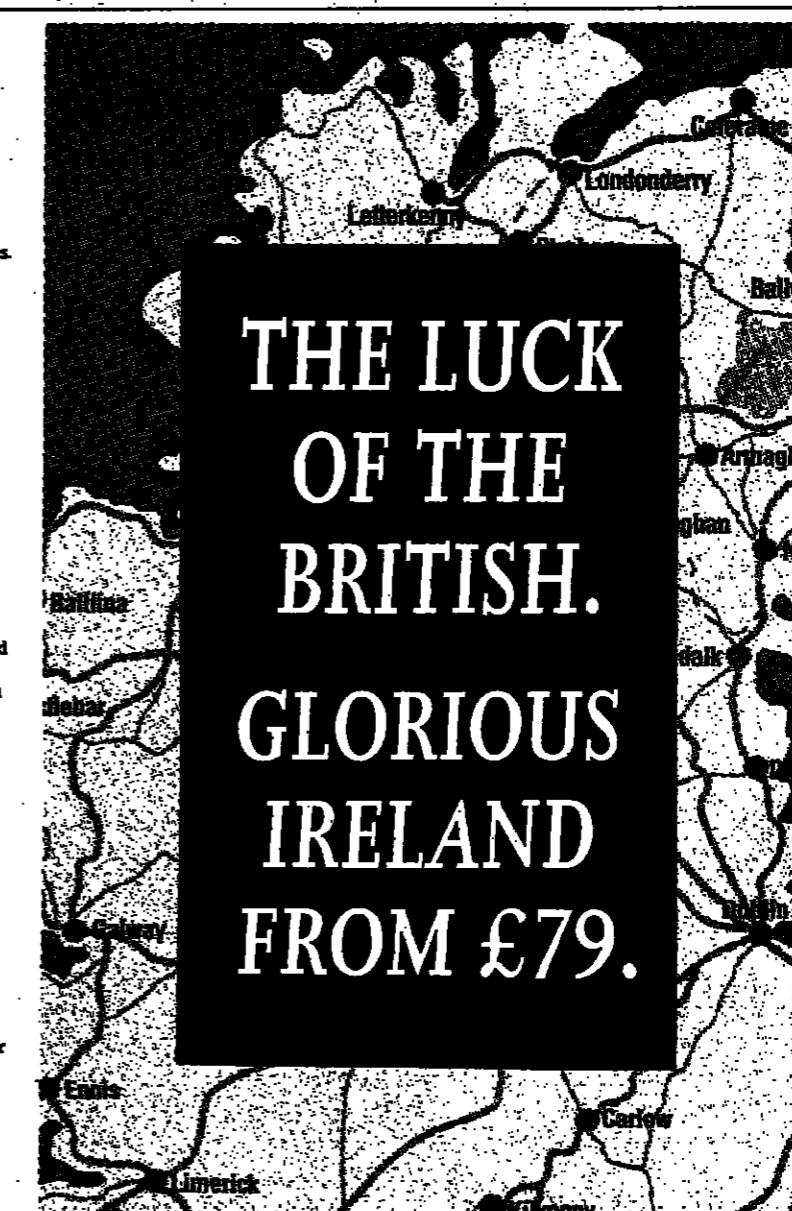
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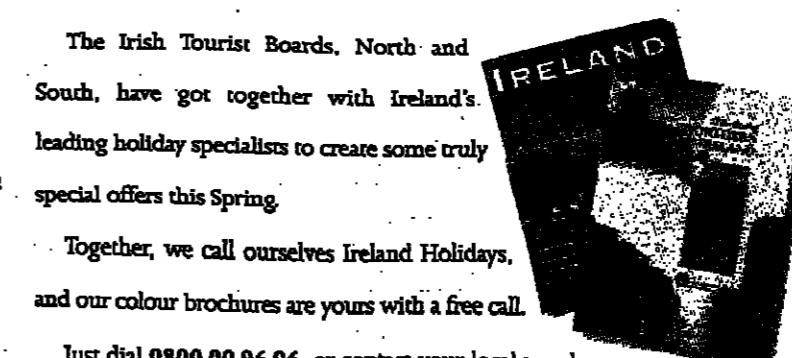
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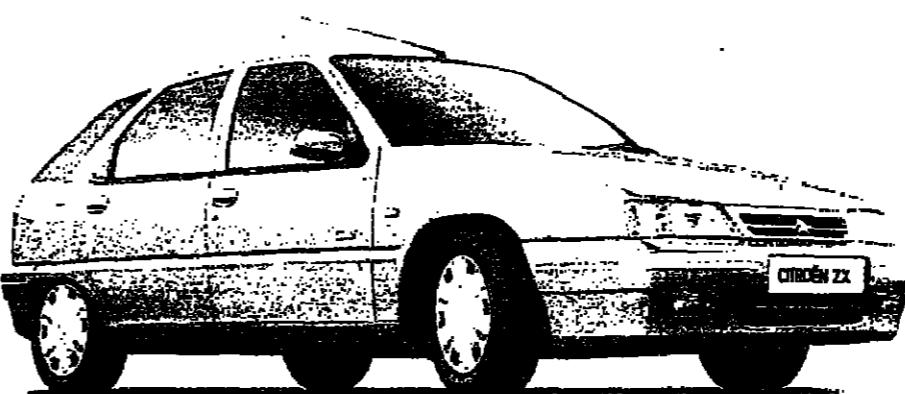
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Raccoon fatally caught in a leg-hold trap.



Bobcat captured in a steel jawed leg-hold trap.



Ermine gnawing at the jaws of a leg-hold trap.

# Will the world's fur trade prove as successful at twisting arms as they are at breaking legs?



In 1991, the Council of the European Community took a decision which was applauded around the world.

With millions of animals dying an agonising death in leg-hold traps, the EC banned their use among member states from January 1st, 1995.

The EC Council at the same time voted to ban fur imports from countries which used the same barbaric methods of killing.

Tragically, only the ban affecting member states has so far been enacted.

Due to pressure from the main trapping nations (Canada and the USA) the European Commissioners decided to postpone the ban on imported furs until January 1st, 1996.

And now, the same pressure has apparently persuaded them to propose postponing the ban again (possibly even lifting it altogether).

The fur trade cannot be allowed to get away with it.

Environment Secretary John Gummer has clearly stated that ... "the UK Government has made it absolutely clear that it's not prepared to have a postponement of this sort" (Today, BBC Radio 4, November 18th, 1995).

Please write now to your MP at the House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA and to your

Euro MP at the European

Parliament, Brussels B 1049 Belgium, urging them to stand firm against any proposals by the European Commission to delay or scrap the fur import ban.

Mr Gummer deserves all our support.

Or January 1st, 1996 will be the start of just another miserable New Year for millions of animals.



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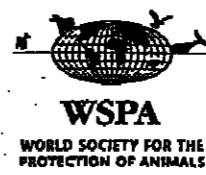
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## Galileo space probe: Nasa scientists wait nervously for news of \$1.6bn flight to explore the solar system's largest planet

# Jupiter mission reaches most dangerous stage

**TOM WILKIE**  
Science Editor

Scientists around the world will wait anxiously tonight for confirmation that the \$1.6bn Galileo space mission to Jupiter has successfully completed the most perilous stage of its six-year, 2.3 billion-mile (3.7 billion-kilometre) journey.

The main space probe must first monitor the final, fiery moments of a "daughter" craft which will plunge deep into the Jovian atmosphere. Then, in a quick planetary ballet, it must manoeuvre itself into orbit around our solar system's largest planet.

"As the instrument-laden spaceship nears Jupiter's system, it is expected to absorb a dose of radiation 35 to 40 times greater than would kill a human. We have everything crossed we can cross - fingers and toes and all like that. It's certainly a nervous time," said William O'Neil, Galileo project manager at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena.

But the scientists at JPL, which manages the Galileo mission, and at Nasa's Ames Research Center in Mountain View, which built the probe, will have to be satisfied with a delayed confirmation that the probe is sending signals and that the orbiter is on course. Radio signals take 52 minutes to travel from Jupiter to Earth.

No pictures or atmospheric data will be available until after information captured on Galileo's tape recorder and its computer is relayed to Earth through Deep Space Network stations in California, Spain and Australia. A first look will not be available until late this month.

Tonight, the cone-shaped atmospheric probe which was released from the orbiter in July should slam into Jupiter's dense, gaseous atmosphere at 106,000 mph. If it enters as planned, it will slow down and parachute through ammonia clouds to a realm never before explored. It will tell the mother ship what it sees inside Jupiter's layers of lightning-ridden clouds and may even detect water rain.

But if the scientists do not get the 746lb (338kg) probe into Jupiter's atmosphere at exactly the right angle, it will either bounce into oblivion or burn up too quickly. The plan is that the atmospheric probe will eventually melt and vaporise, but it should transmit up to 75 minutes of data about chemical composition, radiation, temperature, wind, and atmospheric pressure before contact is cut off. The signals transmitted to the 2.5-ton main orbiter for eventual retransmission to ground control will give scientists their first view of the inner reaches of Jupiter, which is 316 times larger than Earth.

After monitoring its daughter craft's fate, the main orbiter should fire its engines for 49 minutes to enter a two-year, looping orbit around Jupiter and eight of its 16 moons.

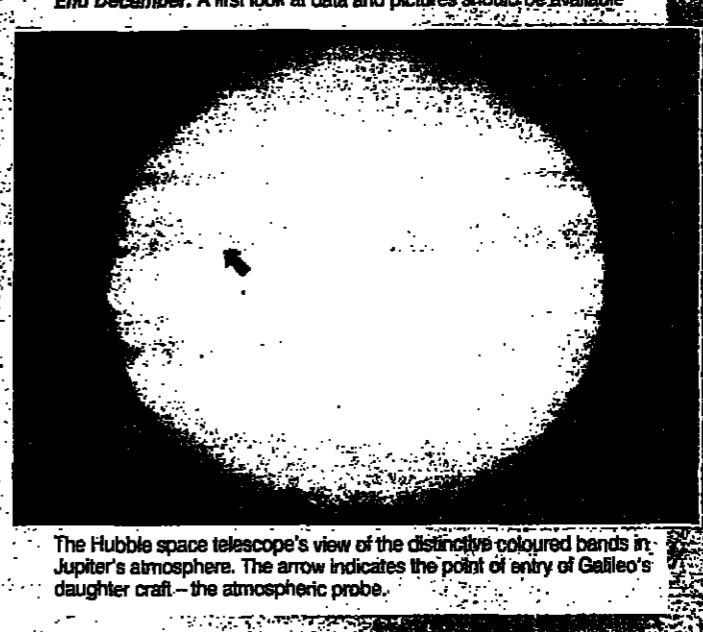
Those moons include Io, which is highly volcanic, and Ganymede, the largest moon in the solar system.

Planning for the mission started nearly 20 years ago, in 1978. More than \$300m had been spent by 1981 on a project that was supposed to be launched in 1984 and to reach Jupiter by July 1987. But the whole mission was delayed and then derailed following the Challenger space shuttle accident of January 1986.



### Countdown to orbit

1989: Galileo is launched from space shuttle Atlantis. February: Circles Venus using its gravity as a sling-shot to give it more energy for its trip to Jupiter. 1990: December First of two swings round the Earth to add further energy. 1991: Main antenna fails to open properly forcing Nasa to rely on auxiliary communications channel which can only transmit data slowly. 1992: December Second "gravity assist" from Earth allowing it to depart in the direction of Jupiter. 1993: July Cone-shaped atmospheric probe released from the main orbiter to pursue its own path to Jupiter. November: Malfunction of on-board tape recorder raises fears that the tape may have broken, leaving Galileo unable to record any scientific data. Tests show it may be salvageable. December 7: Atmospheric probe hits the planet's dense atmosphere at 106,000 mph. For 75 minutes, the probe should transmit data about the composition of the atmospheric gases before high temperatures and pressures 20 times those of Earth's atmosphere tear it apart. For the next 49 minutes, the orbiter's engines should fire to break it into a two-year, looping orbit around Jupiter and eight of its 16 moons. December 12 to 28: Disruption in communications when the Sun blocks the path between Earth and Jupiter. End December: A first look at data and pictures should be available.



The Hubble space telescope's view of the distinctive coloured bands in Jupiter's atmosphere. The arrow indicates the point of entry of Galileo's daughter craft - the atmospheric probe.

## Man accused of killing wife tells of gang ordeal

A man charged with murdering his wife choked back tears yesterday as he told a court how he returned home to find her being held at knifepoint by a gang of vicious masked robbers.

Gordon Wardell, 42, denies murdering Carol, 39, a building society manager, at their home in Meriden, Warwickshire, in September last year before allegedly faking a raid at her branch and concocting a charade of being knocked out by the raiders who took his wife and killed her.

Wardell told the jury at Oxford Crown Court that he got home at 10pm after a drink to find his wife being held hostage.

His voice faltered as he broke down and said: "Nothing

seemed unusual. I thought Carol had gone to bed as she was suffering from period pain.

"As I got in my arms were grabbed from both sides and then forced up my back. There was a cloth put across my face and nose."

"My knees were kicked from behind me. I was down on the floor and the light came on and I could see Carol and the man on the edge of the settee."

"He said to me: 'Do what you are told. Keep quiet and get down on the floor.'

He says he woke up the next morning to find himself alone, bound and gagged. "My legs felt as if rods had been forced under the skin. I was scared, frightened and worried."

The case continues.

## Quarter of young homeless have tried suicide

### GLENDA COOPER

A quarter of young homeless people have attempted suicide in the last year, according to a new mental health survey.

The survey by the Mental Health Foundation found that young homeless people are also twice as likely to suffer psychi-

atric disorder as those who are not homeless. The disorders they suffered from were also likely to be more severe and persistent than disorders among those with a home.

Only 15 per cent of those with a current psychiatric diagnosis have ever had psychiatric help.

Over half of the 161 people

questioned had experienced severe parental neglect or abuse in childhood and 40 per cent had spent time in care. Three times as many of the parents of homeless young people had received psychiatric treatment, mainly for alcohol abuse, compared with the parents of those who were not homeless.

The survey follows last week's Budget which changed benefits to under-25s living in rented accommodation.

The Mental Health Foundation says it is feared that the changes, which mean housing benefit will only meet the cost of shared accommodation, will lead to an increase in the number of young people who rely on the benefit becoming homeless.

Jane McKerrow, director of the foundation, said: "Our research clearly shows that young homeless people are vulnerable to mental health problems and some are so desperate about their futures that suicide seems the only answer."

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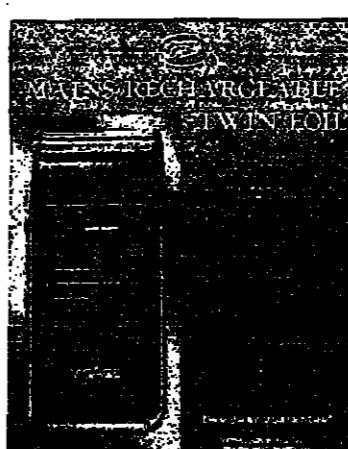


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# international

**Bosnia settlement:** French President warns Milosevic of unspecified action if he fails to produce pilots shot down in August  
**Heal the wounds of youngest victims**

In the run-up to Christmas the *Independent* is asking readers to support four charities working to help child victims of the wars in former Yugoslavia:

Save the Children is focusing its efforts on children who have been separated from their families, counselling and reuniting them;

The Red Cross is running the largest humanitarian operation in the region, looking after refugee camps and linking people through its messaging network;

War Child plans to build a £2.5m music-therapy centre in Mostar, and to send urgently-needed prosthetics to wounded



ed children in the Tuzla area; Child Advocacy International aims to bring up to 100 sick children to Britain for treatment they could not obtain at home.

Please make your cheques or postal orders payable to the charities of your choice and send them to us with the completed coupon.

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 Save the Children (please tick as appropriate)

Signature ..... Date .....

Please post your donation(s) to: The Independent Children of War Appeal, c/o The Independent, PO Box 4011, London E14 5BB. THANK YOU



Snowbound: UN peace-keepers clearing the 6cm of snow that covered the runway at Sarajevo airport yesterday, slowing the arrival of the new peace implementation force

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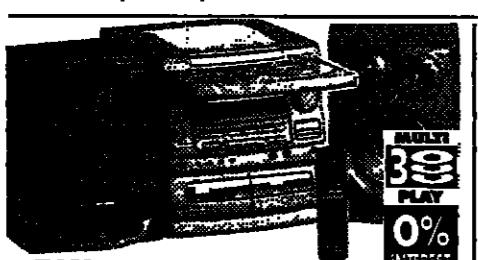


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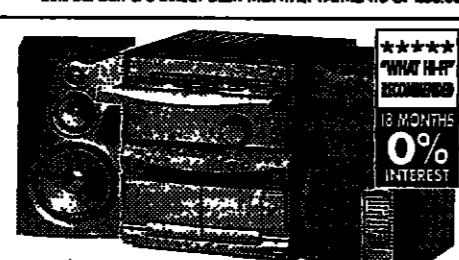
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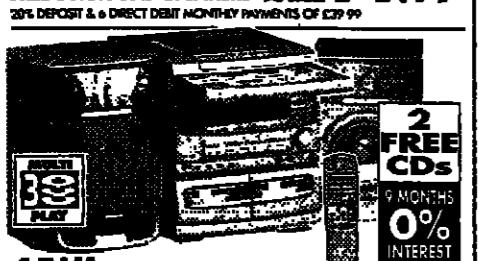
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# Death in Valletta: When the Islamic Jihad chief was shot, he and Iranian agents had been planning assassination of the PLO 'traitor' Arafat murder 'was foiled by Malta killing'

PATRICK COCKBURN  
Jerusalem  
SAFA HAERI  
Paris

Fathi Shkaki, leader of the militant Palestinian Islamic Jihad organisation, who was shot dead in Malta in October, had just met a senior Iranian envoy in Libya to discuss the assassination of Yasser Arafat, the chairman of the PLO.

Iran believes the PLO passed details of Shkaki's travel plans and false passport to Israel, which then arranged for him to be killed outside his hotel in Valletta, a source with access to Iranian intelligence has told the *Independent*.

Shkaki, whose group has carried out a series of suicide bombings against Israeli targets, was based in Damascus. In October he went to Libya, where he met Hussein Shaikeholeslam, Iranian deputy minister for foreign affairs with responsibility for the Arab world, who is also believed to be deputy head of Iranian intelligence.

The source says they discussed the murder of Mr Arafat, hated by Iran and Islamic Jihad for his co-operation with Israel and the US in signing the Oslo peace accords. It is not clear what they were discussing, though Muammar Gaddafi, the Libyan leader, is opposed to Oslo and started to expel 30,000 Palestinians from Libya to put pressure on the PLO.

Mr Shaikeholeslam has long played an important role in Iranian covert operations. He was a leader in the takeover of the US embassy in Tehran in 1979. In 1983 US intelligence believed he helped to organise the suicide truck bomb which killed 241 American Marines in Beirut. He is the liaison between the foreign ministry and the Vezar-e-Ettelat, or

information ministry, which is in fact Iranian intelligence.

There was a good reason why Shkaki and Mr Shaikeholeslam chose to meet in Libya. Islamic Jihad has its headquarters in Damascus, but is closely watched by Syrian intelligence. Iran, although allied to Syria, fears Syria will start negotiations with Israel. Col Gaddafi, on the other hand, allowed Abu Nidal to use Libya as a base when he had Abu Iyad,

police investigation. On his return two men were waiting for him on a motorcycle, one of whom walked up to him and shot him six times in the head. As Shkaki fell, his assassin jumped on to the motorcycle, which was driven off and was found abandoned under a bridge by the jetty of a yacht harbour. Investigators believe the killers were taken off by boat.

Mossad, the Israeli external intelligence organisation, does not lay claim to assassinations, but was widely assumed in Israel to be behind the killing. Ephraim Sneh, the Health Minister, came close to admitting it.

Could PLO intelligence have tipped off Mossad about the whereabouts of Shkaki, as the Iranians believe?

Mossad had reportedly been looking to kill Islamic Jihad leaders ever since two of its suicide bombers killed 21 Israeli soldiers at Becht Lid in Israel in January. Israel also has every reason to try to keep Mr Arafat alive, since the implementation of the Oslo accords depends on his survival. For the same reason Islamic Jihad and the Iranian leadership, who see Oslo as a betrayal of the Palestinians, have a good reason to kill the PLO chairman.

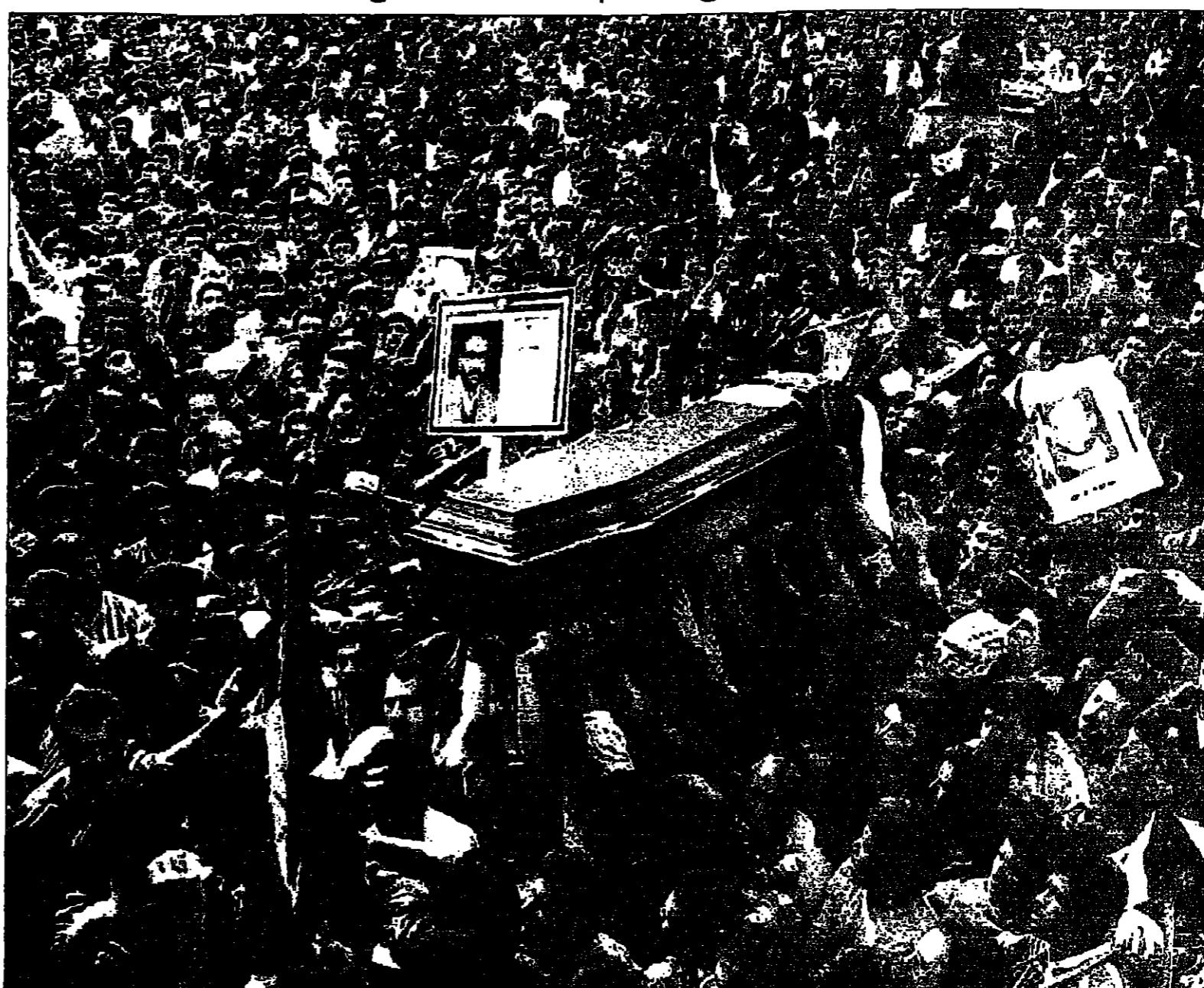
Once relations were warmer.

After the overthrow of the Shah by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979 Mr Arafat was the first foreign leader to be received by the revolutionaries in Tehran. He said: "Every Iranian freedom fighter is represented in the Palestinian revolution."

But Mr Arafat was neither militant nor Islamic enough for the alliance to last. By March this year he was accusing Iran and Syria of fomenting trouble in the Middle East and creating unrest for the Palestinian authority, now established in Gaza and Jericho.

He warned Iran to stop supporting terrorists and said:

Iran was distraught at the



Lost 'son of the revolution': Shkaki's funeral at a Palestinian camp near Damascus. Iran declared a day of national mourning. Photograph: AFP

Fathi Shkaki: PLO fingered him for the hit-squad

Mr Arafat's chief lieutenant, assassinated in 1991.

On the morning of 26 October Shkaki returned by ship to Malta from Libya. He may have travelled with Mr Shaikeholeslam, who later lamented on Iranian radio that Shkaki had decided to break his journey in Malta at the last moment. He was wearing a wig, had shaved off his beard and had a forged Libya passport in the name of Ibrahim Dawish. He took a room in the Diplomat hotel in a suburb of Valletta, where he had stayed before.

Soon after he checked in, Shkaki went out to some local shops to buy shirts for his children, according to a Maltese

"Your oil, your money and your bombs will not open the small footpath for you on one centimetre of Palestinian soil."

Mr Arafat's security forces were also putting pressure on Islamic Jihad in Gaza and were being accused of collaborating with the Israelis. On the West Bank, Jibril Rajoub, head of Palestinian Preventive Security, based in Jericho, has notoriously cordial relations with the Israeli Shin Bet domestic security service.

In October the second stage of the Oslo agreement was signed by Mr Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin. The peace deal was becoming irreversible. When Shkaki's death was confirmed, Iran declared a day of mourning and the radio news was devoted entirely to tributes to him. On 1 November there were marches with slogans in praise of the dead Jihad leader

death of Shkaki. He was their closest ally among the Palestinians and considered a "son" of the Islamic revolution. He had written a book entitled: *Khomeini, the Alternative Solution*. He said once that when the Iranian revolution succeeded "I realised that Islam could overcome even a country like the United States." There are Jihad training camps near Qom, 100 miles south of Tehran.

When Shkaki's death was confirmed, Iran declared a day of mourning and the radio news was devoted entirely to tributes to him. On 1 November there were marches with slogans in praise of the dead Jihad leader

and against Zionism, the US and Mr Arafat. When Rabin was assassinated three days later, Iranian radio said: "While Arafat said he was shocked by the news of Rabin's assassination, Palestinian people rejoiced, distributed sweets, thanked God and danced."

The source close to Iranian intelligence says it is still intent on promoting Mr Arafat's assassination. It has talked with

Ahmed Jibril, head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, which has long had offices in Tehran. Jihad launched two failed suicide bomb attacks against Israeli targets in the Gaza Strip soon after its leader died but has since been silent.

The organisation was small and very much a one-man band under Shkaki, so it may be severely disrupted by his death.

Mr Arafat, who has heard reports of Iranian plans to assassinate him, said mildly in an interview with the *Independent* in Gaza that "a large majority of the Iranians are supporting the Palestinian people." He reminded Iranian leaders that he had supported them in the past, adding: "No one can affect the Palestinian independent decision. It belongs only to the Palestinian people."

## IN BRIEF

### France plans early end to tests

Paris - France's last nuclear test blast in the south Pacific will be before the end of February, several months ahead of schedule, the Defence Minister, Charles Millon, said yesterday. France, which has set off four underground blasts in French Polynesia since September, has pledged to sign a nuclear test-ban treaty as soon as the series is complete. Outrage over President Jacques Chirac's decision to break a three-year moratorium on testing has already prompted Paris to say it will reduce the planned eight tests to six. France insists the tests are necessary to ensure the viability of its independent nuclear force and develop simulation technology to make further tests unnecessary. "The analysis of the fourth test has proven that it and the three prior ones have allowed us to obtain the scientific data expected." AP

### Papandreou 'worsens'

Athens - The health of the Prime Minister, Andreas Papandreou, worsened yesterday. Doctors were to perform a tracheotomy after failing to disconnect him from life support machinery. "As the use of the respirator is expected to continue a tracheotomy was deemed necessary," a medical bulletin said. In a tracheotomy doctors make a slit in the windpipe and create a breathing hole. This will allow them to remove a tube that has snaked down Mr Papandreou's throat since he was hooked to the respirator. AP

### Pizza 'can ward off prostate cancer'

Washington - US researchers have found that pizza and spaghetti sauce can protect against prostate cancer. A Harvard study over six years of the eating habits of 47,000 men found that those who had at least 10 servings a week of tomato-based foods were up to 45 per cent less likely to develop prostate cancer. AP

### Tigers reject amnesty offer

Colombo - Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger separatists dismissed President Chandrika Kumaratunga's offer of amnesty for those who lay down their arms, saying they did not wish to submit to military domination by the army. A spokesman said the rebels had no choice but to "continue with the resistance against military occupation" of the northern rebel stronghold of Jaffna. Reuters

### Gonzalez hints at standing down

Madrid - Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez hinted he may not lead the Socialists in a general election next March, saying he did not want to drag down his party. "I don't want to happen to me what happened to Margaret Thatcher, who didn't realise she was a problem," Mr Gonzalez said. AP

### Bouncer comes down with a bump

Stockholm - A 130kg (286lb) bouncer was sentenced to eight months' imprisonment for suffocating a restaurant guest by sitting on him. Witnesses told a court in Gällivare, northern Sweden, that the doorman, who was not identified, had intervened to stop a brawl. AP

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## international



Marching to the same tune: Lamberto Dini and John Major review the guard yesterday in Florence's Signoria Square

## Major and Dini warn of EU monetary chaos

ANDREW GUMBEL

Florence

John Major and the Italian Prime Minister, Lamberto Dini, made a joint appeal to their European Union partners yesterday for an in-depth analysis of the effects of monetary union, saying that the consequences of getting EMU wrong could be chaos across the continent.

The two leaders, meeting in Florence, appeared to find common cause in discussing the two biggest economies likely to be sidelined in the moves towards a single European currency - Britain because it is reluctant to join, Italy because its economy is unlikely to be strong enough.

Political sources at the sum-

mit said that the two countries, along with France, would press for a detailed analysis of EMU at next week's summit in Madrid. Both leaders noted that only a minority of member-states is likely to meet the criteria for monetary union laid down by the Maastricht treaty, and that plus must therefore be made for the countries left out.

"Monetary union will affect everybody whether they take part in it or not," Mr Major said. "If it proceeds, or when it proceeds, it has got to be right, otherwise it will cause chaos and difficulty across Europe."

With France hit by a growing wave of strikes as a direct result

of its efforts to meet the Maastricht criteria, countries across the EU are becoming painfully aware of the dangers of imposing excessively austere strictures on their economies at a time of recessionary hangover and generally slow growth.

Commissioning a detailed analysis of monetary union - covering import and export markets, foreign exchange trading, agricultural policy and possible social problems - would force the EU to address the mounting difficulties facing its single currency project and perhaps create mechanisms for non-qualifying countries to join after the present 1999 deadline.

Mr Dini denied that the joint

platform was an attempt to delay monetary union, saying there were still two years to go before the third and final phase of the process got under way. But Mr Dini knows, despite his protestations to the contrary, that Italy could never meet the criteria as they stand and that his country's best hope is to find a back door by which to enter after 1999.

The two countries appeared to differ, at least in tone, on what that back door should be. Mr Major rejected the idea that non-EMU countries should create some kind of currency grid akin to the present Exchange Rate Mechanism.

Mr Dini, however, said there had to be a "reasonable degree of exchange-rate relationship".

The issue is of immediate domestic interest in Italy, as Mr Dini is trying to extend his temporary mandate as Prime Minister to the end of Italy's term as EU president, which runs from January to June next year. On Tuesday he asked parliament to leave him in office long enough to prepare a super-austere 1997 budget.

Yesterday, he denied that such a measure would lead to French-style social unrest. "This kind of decision requires dialogue, not coercion," he said. "This is something that they [the French] should bear in mind."

## Kohl and Chirac forge new Europe

MARY DEJEVSKY

Paris

The President of France and the Chancellor of Germany have sent a joint letter to other European leaders, setting out their common position on the future of the European Union.

The letter, to be made public today as Jacques Chirac and Helmut Kohl meet for their latest summit in the German spa town of Baden-Baden, contains recommendations for the reform of EU institutions in the run-up to next year's inter-governmental conference (IGC), but also expresses views on the overall direction the European Union should take.

Refusing to divulge exact details of the letter yesterday, the French President's spokesman, Catherine Colonna, stressed that it was "a basis for reflection and discussion" and directed at making the EU "more effective, more democratic and closer to ordinary citizens". Even in her four-point outline, however, there were indications that some of the Franco-German positions would not please the British government.

France and Germany, it was suggested, want the EU to have a much higher international profile, a wish that appears to presuppose a common foreign policy.

The Franco-German letter also reportedly calls for closer

cooperation in judicial and police matters, especially on questions of "asylum and immigration", but also against terrorism, crime and drugs. While clearly intended to allay German fears about French backsliding on the Schengen treaty on open borders (and perhaps allow France to postpone implementation longer than it already has), the question of judicial and police cooperation has wider implications. Britain has not signed the Schengen treaty, and objects to the idea of a European judicial system beyond the court already in existence.

The French account of the joint letter also mentioned the need for European institutions to be more responsive to people in member countries, and the controversial question of constitutional restructuring.

The joint Franco-German letter is being released a week before the European summit in Madrid, which is expected to finalise preparations for the IGC. But its release at the Franco-German summit suggests a diplomatic effort by both countries to show that they are still functioning together as the "engine of Europe" despite doubts about the extent of President Chirac's commitment to political union, and despite the social unrest in France that threatens its ability to meet the Maastricht criteria for monetary union.

## Socialist MEPs back Turkey trade link

TONY BARBER

Europe Editor

Turkey looks certain to achieve its prized objective of a customs union with the European Union after Socialist and centre-right members of the European Parliament approved the measure last night. The parliament's two largest groups were responding to recent improvements in Turkey's human rights record, clearing the way for ratification of the accord by the full parliament next week.

The European Commission and EU national governments have pressed hard for the agreement, arguing that it is vital to promote stability and prosperity in Turkey, one of the Islamic world's leading practitioners of secular politics. But many MEPs, particularly the Socialists, were highly critical of Turkey's treatment of its ethnic Kurdish minority and of laws that curbed freedom of speech in relation to Kurdish issues.

Turkey's Prime Minister, Tansu Ciller, has spent months lobbying for the customs union, warning EU leaders that if the European Parliament rejected the accord it would trigger a radical pro-Islamic, anti-European mood in Turkey. By the same token, with the parliament ex-

pected now to ratify the agreement, Mrs Ciller and her conservative True Path Party may receive an important boost in Turkey's 24 December parliamentary elections.

Mrs Ciller's government took several steps this year to convince MEPs that it was serious about political reform. In July it steered a set of amendments to the 1982 military-era constitution through the Turkish parliament, increasing the scope for popular participation in politics.

In October the Turkish court of appeals ordered the release of two Kurdish MPs imprisoned for advocating political and cultural rights for Kurds. However, prison sentences on four other Kurdish MPs were upheld.

The government also liberalised Article 8 of the anti-terror law, which had been used to jail more than 100 writers and intellectuals who spoke their minds on Kurdish matters. Last Tuesday Mrs Ciller even told a German television interviewer that she would soon consider lifting emergency rule in south-eastern Turkey, where the armed forces have fought Kurdish guerrillas for the last 11 years.

The customs union is designed to give Turkey the closest relationship with the EU short of full membership.



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## international

# Chirac gives PM 'full support' on strikes

MARY DEJEVSKY  
Paris

As airline staff and teachers prepared to join the strikes that have paralysed France for almost two weeks, President Chirac yesterday put the full weight of his office behind Alain Juppé, expressing "his full support for the position set out by the Prime Minister".

With a true presidential touch, he also told the regular cabinet meeting that special provision should be made during the strikes for homeless people, deprived of the shelter on warm underground stations.

The majority of trade unions, including two of the biggest, the Force Ouvrière (FO) and the CGT, vowed to continue the strikes. Basking in the success of the nationwide protests on Tuesday, and the still-growing strike movement, they called their meeting for further demonstra-

tions to keep up the pressure on the government. The five rail unions have also voted to maintain their 12-day-old strike.

With the battleship forces retreating, the balance of forces – which until Tuesday appeared to favour the protesters – seemed to be shifting to the government. Even the union leader who has made much of the running, Marc Blondel of the FO, seemed to be looking for a way out when he called yesterday not only for the withdrawal of the "Juppé plan" but for "the opening without delay of negotiations at prime-ministerial level".

On a television discussion programme on Tuesday night, Mr Blondel and Louis Vianel of the CGT produced tired clichés which contrasted poorly with an energetic performance from the industry minister, Franck Borotra. Their call yesterday for a second day

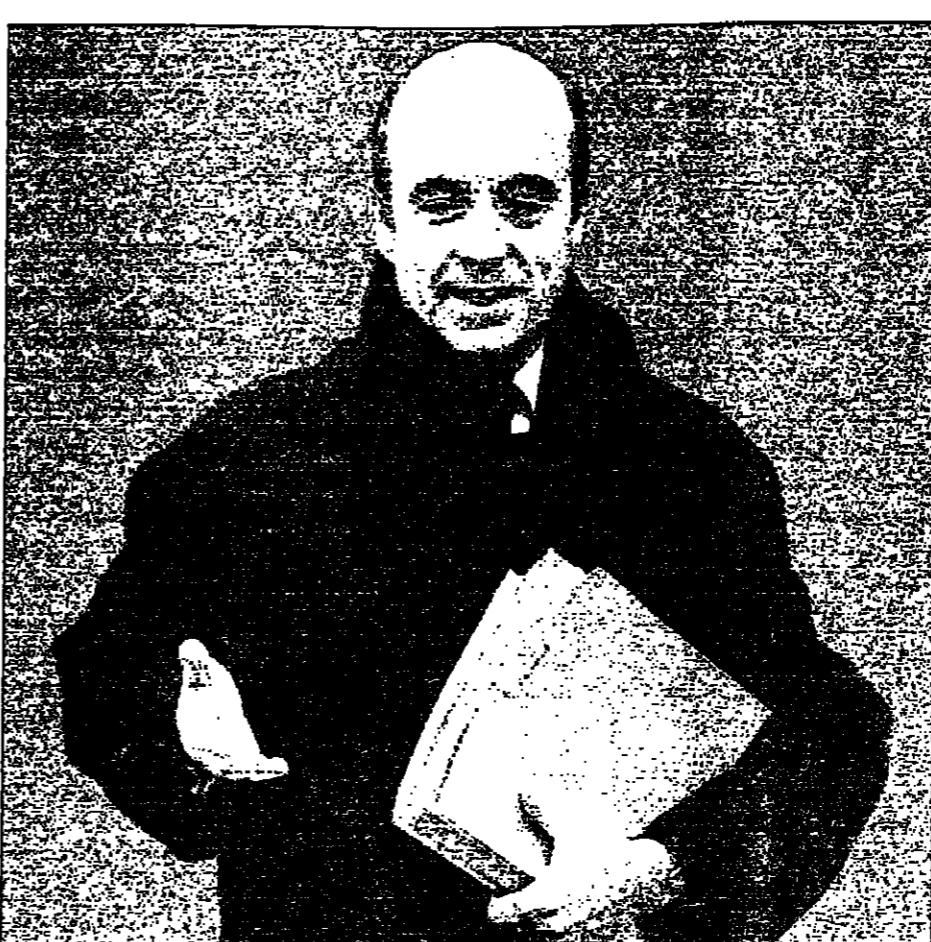
of demonstrations within a week not only looks unimaginative, but holds the serious risk that fewer people will turn out.

Several other factors are moving in the government's favour. Mr Chirac's firm support of Mr Juppé makes a climb down by the Prime Minister less likely. The alternative transport organised for Paris commuters has started to reduce rush-hour jams, and the FO, which yesterday launched a subscription campaign to help strikers, may be running short of money. The cold weather also helps by discouraging marchers.

No less crucial is the fact that there is still a key dissenter in the ranks of the unions. Nicole Notat, head of the biggest union, the CFDT, which has links with the Socialist Party, is adamant that Mr Juppé's plans for welfare reform do have some good points. But Ms Notat's strength among her

own union activists is questionable: she was booed and forcibly removed from the 24 November demonstration by some of her own militants. A wider public, however, sees her as a forthright woman who talks sense and does not allow herself to be pushed around. Yesterday, in words which may turn out to be prophetic, she told a radio interviewer: "I don't know whether the current protests are going to become quite as big as people say."

The protesters, for their part, have on their side the continuing sympathy of much public opinion, the general dissatisfaction with Mr Chirac and Mr Juppé in particular, and the strength of persisting grievances in individual sectors – like the railways. But if layoffs increase, and as deliveries of fuel, parts and raw materials start to seize up, sympathies could change very quickly.



Standing firm: Prime Minister Alain Juppé greets the press after a Cabinet meeting at the Elysée Palace yesterday, as the strikes continue. Photograph: Michel Lipchitz/AP

## Egypt denies hit squads

The Egyptian embassy in London has denied a report in yesterday's *Independent* that the Egyptian government has sent up to 100 men from its security service to hunt down its opponents in Britain, writes Michael Sheridan.

"The Egyptian embassy denies categorically the news report," an official statement said. "This has never been the case nor is it Egyptian policy." The embassy described the report as "groundless and pure imagination," adding that "Egypt is well known to be a country which respects international law and does not interfere in any way in the internal affairs of any country." A Foreign Office spokesman said the report was without foundation.

The *Independent* quoted a reliable military source in Cairo as saying that the agents began arriving in London last month and their mission was to hunt down Islamic fundamentalists, against whom the government of President Hosni Mubarak is engaged in a ruthless campaign in Egypt.

## Trade trip to Nigeria backed by Whitehall

STEVE CRAWSHAW

The British government is sponsoring businessmen to go to Nigeria in order to drum up trade just as Nigerian opposition groups are issuing a concerted call for sanctions against the Nigerian military regime.

When General Sani Abacha's government last month hanged Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others, on what were generally regarded as trumped-up charges, Nigeria was condemned worldwide. It was promptly suspended from the Commonwealth and John Major, who was attending the Commonwealth summit in Auckland, talked of "judicial murder". Nigeria, it was suggested, would now be a pariah.

Now, however, the Department of Trade and Industry is preparing to subsidise a sponsored trip to Nigeria in two months' time.

Philip Oppenheim, a minister at the department, noted recently: "My department has scaled down the level of promotional activity in recent years." None the less, next year's trip, planned for February under the auspices of the London Chamber of Commerce, promises "appropriate high-level PR and press coverage" – perhaps a dubious attraction in the circumstances.

When first asked about government policy, a DTI spokesman insisted that companies receive "no financial support" in terms of the encouragement to do deals. In reality, money is still freely available. Originally, applications for government funds had to be in by 20 October – before Saro-Wiwa's execution and the international uproar that followed. The deadline has now been indefinitely extended.

Organisers admitted yesterday: "We fully expected them [the DTI] to cancel." But Olakunle Sciyinka, co-ordinator of a Nigerian pro-democracy umbrella group in London, said he was not surprised to hear that the trip was going ahead. "It's all bluster. Underneath, it's business as usual."

Tony Lloyd, a Labour foreign affairs spokesman who is hosting a meeting in London today at which Nigerian opposition groups will present their demands for an oil embargo, said he was "surprised" that the DTI had decided to go ahead with the trip. He warned of sending "the wrong message", and argued: "The immediate response ought to be to cancel or at least defer these trips. If there's a milder climate in six or eight months' time, you can always put it back on the agenda."

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## international

Cannabis for medical use: Aids and cancer sufferers find solace in smoke-filled rooms



Lighting the way: Joseph Soto and his friend, Hiram, both HIV positive, enjoy a smoke at the Cannabis Buyers' Club. Photograph: Catherine Leroy

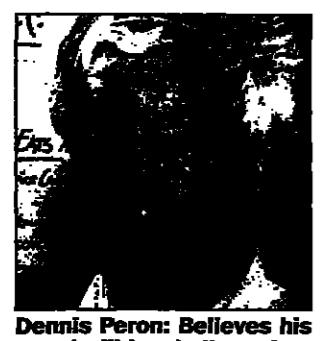
### 'Speakeasy' campaigners push case for marijuana

DAVID USBORNE  
San Francisco

It is two minutes to one in the afternoon and "last orders" is called at the Island Bar. A handful of punters stir lazily from the armchairs and sofas that line the walls to make a last purchase. Only Mexican varieties are sold on this floor; for the more expensive Californian labels there is another bar upstairs. We are not talking booze here, but the green leaf — marijuana.

This is the Cannabis Buyers' Club on Market Street in San Francisco. An anonymous-looking four-storey office building from the outside, within it is a modern version of a Prohibition era speakeasy. The air is heavy with marijuana smoke and the rhythms of Annie Lennox. This lunchtime the trade is hectic at both bars, which, as well as cannabis by the 2.5-gram bag, also sell pot-laced pastries, water pipes and other drug-taking paraphernalia.

"What we are doing is totally, absolutely illegal," confesses the club's director and founder, Dennis Peron, an imp-



Dennis Peron: Believes his stand will be vindicated

ish grin breaking out from under his white hair. But this is by no means a frivolous venture, pursued just for the fun of breaking the law. On the contrary, Mr Peron wants to change the law. This is a club reserved for customers with serious, mostly chronic diseases, in particular Aids and cancer, and it is at the forefront of a growing nationwide campaign to legalise cannabis for medical use.

No one gets the necessary membership without a written diagnosis from their doctor.

Nor is this an ordinary day at the club, one of about 26 now operating across America. When one o'clock comes, Mr Peron leads 100 of his members on a march down Market Street to United Nations Plaza to publicise the latest phase of his campaign: a drive to collect enough signatures to put a popular petition to California's voters next November, asking them to let doctors prescribe marijuana to the gravely ill. The police have shown up in strength, but, this being San Francisco and an oasis of liberal politics in America, they actually help the marchers. Passing cars honk with approval.

It was after the death of his former lover from Aids that Mr Peron founded the club in 1991, the first of its kind. He has seen its membership explode to more than 7,000 today. As much as a dispensing chemist for the cannabis, it is also a place for social contact and mutual support. "I'm so proud and so happy these people aren't alone any more," says Mr Peron.

Curtis, for example, who is 34 and has had HIV for nine years, comes to the club about twice a week, in part to linger for a couple of hours and meet friends. More importantly, he is certain marijuana has helped his body cope with the virus. He says that it helps him sleep, restores his appetite and suppresses the nausea that is brought on by the anti-Aids drug, AZT. A fresh joint in his hand, he explains: "If I didn't take pot, it would just be an endless cycle of getting up in the morning and not being able to eat anything and then not taking the AZT because it makes me feel so bad." Several others at the bar offer similar testimonies. "If it wasn't for the club, I would be dead by now," says Peter Dekon, who has a brain tumour. "I'm certain of it."

On the legal front Mr Peron's experience has been more frustrating. The federal government continues to resist revising its designation of cannabis as a category one drug, too dangerous even for doctors to prescribe on however a limited basis. Cocaine and morphine, by contrast, are category two drugs. The California Assembly finally this year did pass a law offering a limited legalisation of the drug for medical use, only to see it instantly vetoed by Governor Pete Wilson.

Even so, the notion of allowing marijuana use for therapeutic purposes only is increasingly being debated nationwide. Federal officials insist that there is no scientific evidence proving the benefits of marijuana as a treatment. But last summer the Journal of the American Medical Association published an article advocating limited legalisation co-authored by Lester Grinspoon, a professor of psychiatry at Harvard. "The ostensible indifference of physicians should no longer be used as a justification for keeping this medicine in the shadows," the article argued.

Back at the club, Dennis Peron remains convinced that he will one day be vindicated. With the California petition, he may be making an important start. In a non-binding vote four years ago, Californians voted 80 per cent in favour of limited legalisation. If he can get the necessary 600,000 signatures to qualify for a place on the ballot, his latest initiative could become law. "This is just now beginning to achieve a critical mass," he says, passing a joint around.

## Gingrich faces new threat of legal scrutiny

RUPERT CORNWELL  
Washington

His popularity tumbling and his judgement increasingly questioned even within his own Republican party, Newt Gingrich is facing a new threat: the likely appointment of an independent counsel to investigate alleged ethical irregularities by the House Speaker.

After months of stonewalling, Republicans on the House Ethics Committee have reluctantly agreed to the principle of an outside investigator to look into what has been called "Newt Inc." a skein of political and personal ventures by Mr Gingrich, some involving the political action committee Gopac, which the Speaker headed until early this year.

Until now the committee of five Republicans and five Democrats has been deadlocked. But the dam burst last week with charges by the Federal Election Commission (FEC) that Gopac spent huge sums helping Mr Gingrich win a hairbreadth re-election victory in 1990. It also produced documents showing

a counsel with broad powers will have much material to work with. According to a transcript released by the FEC, one speaker at an internal Gopac meeting in August 1990 estimated "Newt's support" at \$250,000 a year. Separate allegations centre on possible Gopac funding for a college course taught by Mr Gingrich, in breach of tax laws.

The biggest headlines however were generated in autumn 1994 by the Speaker's infamous — and shortly thereafter cancelled — contract for a \$4.5m book advance from Rupert Murdoch's HarperCollins publishing company, just when Mr Murdoch had pressing business with Congress and federal broadcasting authorities.

Meanwhile, President Bill Clinton yesterday vetoed the Republican bill for balancing the budget by 2002. But the White House is promising its own proposal by the end of the week, raising hopes of a compromise to avert another federal shutdown when the current stopgap government funding expires on 15 December.

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**Russian elections:** Among the dispossessed and disillusioned, support grows for general who sees the positive side of Stalin

## Gruff hero of Afghanistan wins hearts of the nostalgic

PHIL REEVES  
Moscow

He was a perfect warm-up man for a general: fast-talking, crisp haircut and smart as a button in a black suit and tie. Just the ticket to work up a lather among a crowd of provincial Russians, gathered in a public hall to seek a Messiah to solve their economic woes, and restore their lost sense of national pride.

The audience had been promised Alexander Lebed, the retired army officer who is running for a nationalist party widely tipped to do well in this month's parliamentary elections. General Lebed – usually a strict disciplinarian – was late. So they turned their attention to the pitch man instead.

Did the party, the Congress of Russian Communities, allow non-Russians as members, a man asked from the floor of the packed hall. The aide allowed a lemon-segment smile to spread across his face. "I can tell you one thing," he said, "there isn't one black in our party." Contentment rippled from the gallery to the stage.

Try as he may, General Lebed will have an uphill task persuading liberal analysts that his party – or at least its followers – is no more than a centre-left patriotic organisation.

True, most of the time he occupies the centre ground, running on about the importance of law and order, decrying the folly of the costly war in Chechnya and arguing the need to help the 25 million Russians stranded outside the country by the break-up of the Soviet Union. He says he believes in a free press and – rare, this, for a two-star Russian general – a

eadly approved of Stalin, but he did say he respected the way Stalin set himself a goal and completed it. There were no protests.

This may be nothing more than campaign rhetoric, a celebrity soldier playing to a crowd of small-town Russians, but it works. For if there is a golden boy among the politicians from the 43 parties running for the election on 17 December, it is Alexander Lebed. Polls suggest he is the most popular leader in Russia.

General Lebed (the name means "Swan") is a former commander of the Fourteenth Army in Moldova, from which he resigned after using his tanks to protect Russian-led separatists. The only thing more impressive is his subsequent popularity is his baritone voice, which seems to emanate from the soles of his impeccably polished black shoes. "You need to be strong. I have a hand that can be made into an iron fist," he thundered.

Polls show that his party, which is led by Yuri Skokov, the former head of Boris Yeltsin's Security Council, and Sergei Glazev, a respected economist, is among the handful of blocs that are likely to emerge strongly in the elections to the Duma. It seems especially pop-

ular in the army, worn down by miserable pay and conditions and the Chechen war. To military eyes, General Lebed embodies the ideal of a strong leader: a hero of the Afghan war, ex-paratrooper and former boxer. He may even draw support away from their other heart-throb, the ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky.

The key question is whether the party will do well enough to allow General Lebed to mount a presidential challenge. He told the crowd in Kaluga that he is ready to run, although he has not decided whether to do so.

For over an hour the audience listened to him, a ram-rod figure in a black suit and V-necked jumper who punctuated his speech with wry jokes. Afterwards, as they stood wrapped in furs against -5C temperatures, most seemed won over.

"He is a very intelligent, honest, brave, and clever man," said Svetlana Ilyumachan, a 65-year-old professor. "I think he's a future president."

Galina Ivanovna, a pensioner, was still more entranced: "He has a strong fist," she enthused. "If he does everything he says he's going to, he will change our lives." There's a slim chance she could be right.

Leading article, page 26



Photograph: Frank Spooner

You need to be strong. I have a hand that can be made into an iron fist'

small, all-professional army.

But every now and then there is a glimpse of something else. His warm-up man had supplied one such insight to the audience of pensioners, war veterans and ordinary working Russians in Kaluga, an industrial city two hours' drive south of Moscow.

Less than half an hour later, the 46-year-old general provided another. He did not tell the crowd that he wholeheart-

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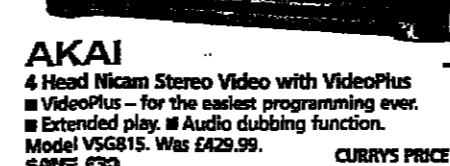
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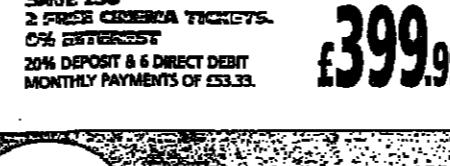
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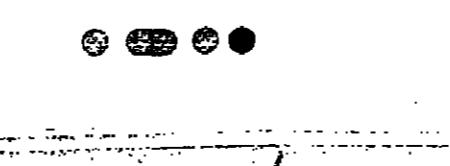
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## Four die in Chinese migrant worker riot

TERESA POOLE  
Peking

A battle between migrant workers from inland China and local villagers has left at least four people dead in the booming southern region of Shenzhen. Security forces opened fire on crowds in the most serious known clash this year involving China's army of "floating workers" according to Hong Kong newspaper reports.

During several hours of confrontation, the village Communist Party headquarters was ransacked, and at least two victims were reported beaten to death. Dozens were injured.

Tension between migrant workers and locals runs high in most of China's economically advanced cities and coastal provinces. Poor farmers who flood in from inland say they are treated with contempt by locals, though they do most of the hard labour and dirty jobs that no one else wants. The locals blame the migrants for soaring crime and overburdened local services.

Shenzhen, bordering Hong Kong, has one of the world's fastest growing economies. Its Special Economic Zone was China's first experiment with capitalism 15 years ago. Many factories depend on cheap migrant labour to churn out billions of pounds' worth of goods for export.

Such clashes are believed to be common in China, but usually go unreported. Details of this one filtered out because it happened close to Hong Kong.

## Peking set to foist its lama on Tibet

TIM McGIRK  
New Delhi

Chinese authorities plan to enthrone a six-year-old boy tomorrow as the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, one of Tibet's highest spiritual leaders, in a move that is likely to intensify Tibetan anger against Peking's rule, according to one official in Dharamsala, home of the Dalai Lama's government-in-exile in India.

By placing their young candidate, Gyaltsen Norbu, on the Panchen Lama's throne in the town of Shigatse, the Chinese will break an ancient mystical tradition and violate the Buddhist beliefs held by millions of Tibetans. The Dalai Lama, Tibet's exiled spiritual ruler, has already found a young nomad boy believed to be the Panchen Lama reborn.

The Chinese have snubbed the Dalai Lama's choice and intend to install a child whose father is believed to be a Communist Party security officer, charged, ironically, with rooting out Tibetan Communists in Nagchu district suspected of

retaining their Buddhist beliefs and nationalistic tendencies.

"Contrary to Chinese media reports of crowds ecstatically greeting the pretender Panchen Lama ... the authorities made every effort to isolate the boy for fear of any outburst of popular anger," according to one official in Dharamsala, home of the Dalai Lama's government-in-exile in India.

Senior lamas and Tibetan officials have been ordered by the Chinese to attend the ceremony in Shigatse or face punishment. In Lhasa, the Tibetan capital, over 300 monks walked out of a tea ceremony several days ago when they realised it was being offered in honour of the rival Panchen Lama of the Chinese.

The last Panchen Lama died in 1989, after spending 12 years under house arrest by the Chinese. Fears are growing for the safety of the nomad boy chosen by the Dalai Lama. He and his parents were arrested and taken to Peking, where they are being kept under house arrest.

## argument



**Colin Blakemore**, in the first of two opposing articles today and tomorrow by leading scientists, argues that BSE is a cause for great public concern

# Why we should all give up beef

We've all seen them – those pitiful images of wobbly cows. We've all imagined it – a plague of Biblical proportions striking people down with a disease that literally rots the brain. The most horrific scenario is as follows: BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) is caused by feeding cows with material from sheep infected with a similar condition, scrapie; the transmissible agent has spontaneously transformed, rendering it infectious to other species including humans; it pervades the human food chain, not only through fragments of offal in meat pies, sausages and burgers, but in the nerves that are found in the best cuts of meat, as well as gravy granules and, conceivably, milk; the human disease has a very long incubation period, perhaps 20 years, and

thus a pandemic of incurable and lethal disease will hit Britain in a decade or so, striking down a generation of beef-eating 30-year-olds and leaving the country of beefeaters in the hands of vegans.

Before this is quoted as my opinion, I hasten to add that we have solid evidence for none of this story, and I hope that my heart that it's nonsense. But what we are most definitely not entitled to say is what the Health Secretary, Stephen Dorrell, did say last Sunday, that there is "no conceivable risk" of BSE being transmitted from cows to people. This statement revealed as much about the lamentable ignorance of scientific methods and elementary statistics among British politicians as it did about the desperation of the Government



Food for thought: statistical observations may not be conclusive, but they do not support Stephen Dorrell's claim that there is 'no conceivable risk'

to avoid yet another scandal. Not only is it a risk "conceivable" but it is increasingly being acknowledged by experts, including the Government's own advisers and the scientists whose research will eventually allow that risk to be properly assessed.

The very nature of spongiform encephalopathies militates against a rapid resolution of the current dilemma. We don't even know for sure the nature of the transmissible agent in BSE, although it is probably a so-called prion, a class of chemical agents named as recently as 1982. These nasty little molecules are non-living fragments of protein that are resistant to disinfectants or modest heat and can probably never be combated by conventional vaccination. Healthy nerve cells in the brain produce prion proteins,

but they differ from the nasty prions in having a different molecular shape. The bad prion does its deadly business by wrapping itself around the healthy form, replicating itself, causing the destruction of nerve cells and the release of more evil molecules. As far as we know, prion protein stays trapped in the nervous system of an infected animal, but that means

that it could, in principle, be present in any part of the body that has a nerve supply, including muscle (ie, meat).

Spongiform brain diseases occur naturally in many species, though they tend to be very rare. The human encephalopathy, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD), was described early this century. There are about one in a million cases a year of CJD all

over Europe – that means about one a week in this country. Ninety per cent of them are thought to be caused by a spongiform fault occurring in nerve cells, which makes them produce the wrong sort of prion. There is no evidence, in any species, that these diseases are contagious or can be transmitted sexually or even through blood. But they are transmissible. We know that from the chilling story of the spongiform disease kuru, which occurs surprisingly frequently among New Guinea people, who have the curious habit of eating the brains of their dead relatives. It seems that prions from an infected human brain can enter the body through the gut, get into the blood and then infect the brain of the consumer. The average incubation period for kuru (between eating Uncle Arthur and feeling very odd) is only four years. Although it is often said that the incubation period for CJD is 20 years or more, there is no strong evidence for this.

The first cases of BSE in British cattle were reported in November 1986. Where did BSE come from? The finger of guilt pointed clearly at the relatively recent practice of giving cattle (especially dairy cows) feed containing bone meal and carcass trimmings from sheep (and indeed from cattle, too). A committee chaired by Sir Richard Southwood, set up by the Government in May 1988, concluded that the sheep products in feed probably caused the transmission of a scrapie-like condition to cattle. An alternative opinion is that the beef products in cow feed were responsible. Whatever the origin, feeding practices appeared to be to blame and the Government, acting with admirable speed, introduced a ban on the feeding of ungulates to ungulates in July 1988.

Everyone agrees that no human being appears to have developed a spongiform disease after eating lamb or even sheep brain, although scrapie (which is, incidentally, largely genetic in origin) has been known for at least the past 250 years. On the other hand, if material from the brain of an infected sheep is injected directly into the brain of a monkey, the latter develops a spongiform disease after about three and a half years. The conclusion must be that the scrapie agent does not normally reach the brain from the gut. The Southwood Committee concluded that it was also unlikely (not "inconceivable", please note) that the BSE agent

would transmit to humans through food, but, to err on the side of caution, they recommended the exclusion from the human food chain of infected carcasses and milk from infected animals, and the withdrawal of bovine products from materials used for medicinal purposes. Again, the Government acted promptly, in August 1988 requiring the slaughter of obviously infected animals and the destruction of their milk.

In November 1989 the "specified offal" ban came into force, forbidding the use of various bits of cattle, including brain and spinal cord, in products for human consumption. Despite persistent reassurances, it seems that this ban was not completely

**The scares, categorical denials and escalating restrictions have made me more concerned**

effective, either because of sloppy methods or deliberate negligence, and it has been progressively strengthened.

The Southwood Committee predicted that the total of BSE cases would be 17,000–20,000, that it was unlikely to transmit to other species, and that cattle would be a "dead-end host", the disease disappearing within a few years. In fact, the rate of new cases rose to 1,000 a week, and 300 a week are still being reported; many of them animals born after the ban (BABEs).

The most likely interpretation is that the ban isn't being fully observed. However, there remains the frightening possibility of "vertical transmission", from infected animals to their offspring, perhaps across the placenta or through milk. This has been invoked as the possible cause of new cases of BSE among BABEs, but if the incubation period of BSE in cattle is about four years, the cases we are seeing now were infected in the early Nineties, when the controls were certainly less strict.

I gave up eating all beef when I first heard of BSE. I have to admit that this was as much because of the evidence of a link to cancer and heart disease as any real fear of catching BSE. Nevertheless, the series of media

scare, categorical Government denials, and escalating restrictions has made me more concerned rather than less. Many scientists and clinicians far more expert in this area than I now appear to share my worries, most notably Sir Bernard Tomlinson, eminent neuropathologist and former government adviser, who recently said that he had changed his mind and that burgers, pies and beef liver might (note "might") cause CJD.

Sir Bernard's remarks and the ensuing media concern were triggered by a somewhat mysterious series of individual cases, including some in surprisingly young adults and especially four dairy farmers who had worked with infected herds. Statistician Dr Sheila Gore estimated that there should have been only about two cases among all farmers since 1990 and that the probability of the four deaths among dairy herdsmen arising by chance variation on the normal pattern was 1 in 10,000.

The numbers are still very small and there are some concerns about the statistical methodology. However, in scientific research a probability of just 1 in 20 is usually taken as "statistically significant". The observations may not be conclusive but they most definitely do not support Mr Dorrell's statement that there is "no conceivable risk".

The next two years will be critical. If research continues, we may also have a much clearer picture of how these encephalopathies transmit and, if humans are indeed protected in some way from BSE, how that protection operates. In this context, I note with regret that the Neuropathogenesis Unit in Edinburgh, one of the main centres studying the disease, has recently had its funding cut.

Given the quagmire of slim evidence and contradictory opinion, what should the meat-loving public do? Stay calm; don't eat beef pies, burgers or sausages; consider giving up all beef until the picture is clearer; listen to the scientists. And the Government should learn that if it continues to betray its ignorance of the concept of risk by transforming cautious scientific and medical advice into categorical reassurances, which it subsequently has to withdraw, the public will rightly become increasingly distrustful of anything that it says.

*The writer is Waynflete Professor of Physiology at the University of Oxford. Tomorrow: Robert Will, head of the CJD surveillance unit at Edinburgh's Western General Hospital.*

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# Atishoo! Atishoo! They all cash in

A flu epidemic is good news for a company with a 'wonder drug' in the lab. **Liz Hunt** looks behind the hype

Nobles at the courts of Queen Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots referred to it as the "newe acquaintance". In 1568, a Thomas Willis said that it appeared to be sent "by some blast of stars", and in 1775 it was reported that 20,000 people had been "seized in one night".

More than 200 years later influenza is still grabbing headlines. One of the most common and debilitating of global infections, the virus can have a devastating impact on industry, schools and hospitals. Millions of pounds have been invested in trying to beat it, but so far it has defied the best efforts of scientists. So when a new flu cure is mooted, it is guaranteed column inches.

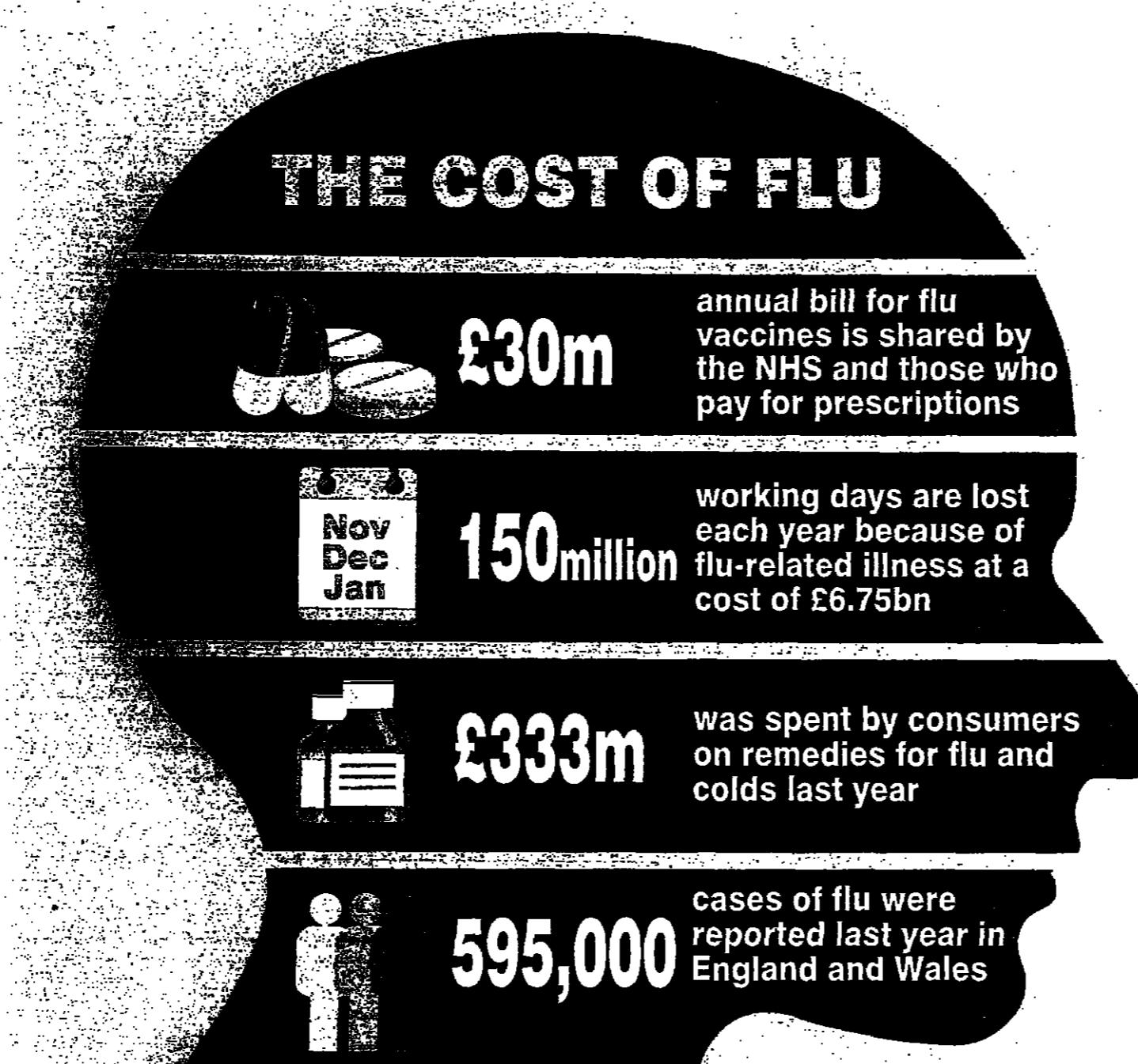
With an eagle eye on its

Their confidence in a drug tested on a handful of volunteers has alarmed observers

share price, Glaxo Wellcome has seized the opportunity presented by reports of a pre-Christmas epidemic to hype a new potential flu drug, one which is scarcely out of the laboratory.

The company says that a poor flu season last year hampered the development of the compound, known as GG167. There were too few cases to try it on. But this year, the company says confidently, the surge in cases of flu and flu-like illness now being reported has presented the ideal conditions for large-scale clinical trials. It predicts approval from regulatory authorities for a nasal spray or inhalation as early as 1997, with sales in its first year in excess of £200m.

Such confidence in a drug which has been tested in just a handful of human volunteers so far - very few of whom actually had flu - has alarmed drug industry observers and leading scientists. They see a trend developing in which British pharmaceutical companies, once a model of caution, are making claims for compounds still in the preliminary stages of development.



The reasons are clear. The executives of British companies are desperate to retain their dominant position in the global market place, and time is running out. They need new products to replace their top sellers - drugs like Zantac, an anti-ulcer treatment and the best selling drug in the world, but one which loses its patent exclusivity in less than two years' time. Drug companies believe that the "hyping" strategy persuades share-

holders to keep the faith. British Biotech, a relatively new company, last week saw its share price shoot up by more than 50 per cent after releasing results of a new anti-cancer drug. The drug, marimastat, had been tested in just 94 patients for one month only.

GG167 is certainly a novel approach to combating the influenza virus. The computer-designed drug does not kill it, but appears to stop the virus in its tracks. It blocks an

enzyme, neuraminidase, which is essential for the release of the virus from infected human cells in the nasal passage and the airways of the lungs. The theory is that the immune system will then "mop up" these infected cells and so prevent their spread through the rest of the body.

Peter Collins, a scientist at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, is credited with discovering GG167 in the mid-Eighties. However,

the compound belongs to a much older group of chemicals developed in the Sixties by Peter Palese, a chemist in Vienna. He recognised their potential as anti-viral drugs, but Collins, an X-ray crystallographer, was the one to "fine-tune" the original molecule until it was specific for strains A and B of the flu virus - the most common strains in circulation - sticking to them at a particular point and inhibiting neuraminidase.

Palese's molecule was boat-shaped and fitted a groove in the viral structure neatly enough, according to Professor John Oxford, a leading virologist at the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel. "What Collins did was add a little oar shape to the molecule so that it fitted even better and had greater efficacy against the virus," he explains.

In the test tube and in laboratory animals, GG167 has proved successful, but in

## Coughing up for a remedy

Paracetamol and a hot drink with honey and lemon will relieve cold symptoms just as well as the most expensive over-the-counter branded remedies, according to research by the Consumers' Association magazine *Which?*

Treating aches and pains with the maximum dose of a "combination" formula such as *Day Nurse Liquid Cold and Flu Remedy* costs £1.93 a day. Paracetamol and a hot drink will knock you back 35p and give the same effect.

Adults suffer on average four colds a year and children twice as many. To counter them we spend £300m a year on the 200-plus remedies available.

*Which?* tried a range of remedies costing up to £4.75 and concluded that popular "combination" remedies (which contain painkiller, decongestant and cough soother), will often do little good unless you have the full range of symptoms - otherwise you are only swallowing unnecessary drugs.

The most expensive combination remedies are *Day Nurse Liquid Cold and Flu Remedy* at £1.93 per day and *Flurex Cold/Flu Capsules with Cough Supressant* at £1.94. But *Lemsip* (95p per day), and *Boots Hot Lemon Cold Relief with Decongestant* (94p) also cost far more than paracetamol.

Cold sufferers should treat symptoms singly, taking paracetamol, aspirin or ibuprofen for aches and pains, treating bad congestion with a spray and, if really necessary, a dry cough with a suppressant. But the magazine warns victims "there is no convincing proof" that cough expectorants such as *Rohitussin for Chesty Coughs* (£1.12 per day), and *Vicks Original Cough Syrup (chesty)* (£1.59) work; warm water is probably just as effective.

Only sore throat lozenges containing doses of anaesthetic such as *Merocaine*, may soothe soreness; others, containing anti-bacterial ingredients, are not likely to help any more than any other sweet. The simple fact is you're probably better off with plenty of rest and lots of fluids," said Diane McCrea, *Which?* head of food and health. "Sadly, the world still awaits a cure for the common cold."

Glenda Cooper

## Diary

JOHN WALSH

"Shock jocks" aren't to be found only on Talk Radio UK, it seems. Or so the writer Charles Jennings discovered when he agreed to chat on BBC Radio Leeds last Sunday, to plug his book *Up North*, in whose pages he takes several swipes at the loveliness of virtually anywhere in England north of Potters Bar. The show was hosted by one Peter Levy - presumably not the Jesuit poet who's married to Cyril Connolly's widow - who invited along Alan Mitchell, the ailing northern MP for Great Grimsby and *quondam* broadcaster.

Responding with predictable fury to Jennings's drivel views of their respective home towns (Grimsby, he had opined, "is full of carpet warehouses"), Levy and Jennings began to abuse the hapless writer in decreasingly humorous ways. "Let's go down there," Mitchell said eventually, "and kick him in the balls."

"It's time someone told him," agreed Levy, "to bugger off." "What's it like," they chorused, "being a dork?" And what was it like? "It was like being beaten up in the playground by a couple of northern gits," replied the unabashed (if decidedly bashed) Jennings. His next book is a swinging attack on "aristocrats, Sloanes and people who shop at Harvey Nichols". I look forward to the interview on Radio Posh.

Picture the scene. You are Brian Sewell, pompadoured, vowel-strangling, celebrated (and, occasionally, vilified) art critic of the London *Evening Standard*. You return, last week, from a spell in hospital to file your exciting thoughts on, say, the Turner Prize, only to find that your place in the Thursday arts section has been taken by a critic you've never heard of, writing a glowing report on the work of a sculptor, William Turnbull, whom you find spectacularly free of merit. You wonder what she's doing sneaking into your slot during your not-very-pronounced



Part of the Hugh Grant programme involved a trip to a south London pub, where Queenan/Grant is filmed meeting real British people rather than the stammering characters with which Hollywood believes this country is populated. The idea was that Queenan should be seen lecturing a crowd of jolly regulars about the need for gentlemanly behaviour. They miscalculated slightly, though, in choosing a pub in the Old Kent Road more known for villainy than Cockney nostalgia. As Queenan stood on the bar and launched into his humorous harangue ("All that separates the likes of you from the likes of me is one word: decency"), a hundred eyes like Stanley knives turned on the hapless Yank. Tragically, Johnson, Queenan and Co had stumbled upon an *ad hoc* convention of 50 Millwall supporters plotting their next act of ultra-violence. As Queenan was hustled from the bar, only the presence of television cameras came between him and instant evisceration.

Things have gone completely screwy in the on-off saga of the Reed poets. Earlier this year, all the poets publishing new books under the Sinclair-Stevenson imprint received a letter from the Reed Group bosses saying, plaintively, "We have no expertise in this area of publishing", and saying they weren't going to touch any more confused verse. They also offered to pay the poets their advances in full. At anyone who has ever dealt with poets could have predicted, a war of attrition broke out. It lasted all year. Some poets have taken the Reed Group to court. Some have demanded to be published, whether the company likes it or not. They have all banded together in a grumbling freemasonry - Anthony Thwaite, Jon Silkin, Alan Brownjohn, Tony Pitt-Kethley, Michael Glover, William Scammell, Martyn Crucifix - and made the Reed Group's life hell. At least that's what I gather from the news that the group's legal adviser has just written a letter to the aggrieved Parnassians offering £500 to each of the authors "by way of resolution ... in settlement of the whole matter". In other words,

"Here's some cash, you mutinous dogs. Now will you shut the \*\*\* up?"

Anyone who couldn't score a seat at the *Vogue* Christmas party last night could settle for a good second-best at the Avenue, the fantastically swish new bar 'n' restaurant in St James's that launched itself on a tidal wave of Dom Pérignon and A-list celebs. An ex-Warburg moneybags called



But it's better and better for him ...

Christopher Bodker, two of his friends and 60 shareholders are collectively responsible for this desperately glam establishment, which hopes, the accompanying PR stuff tells me, "to bring the style and energy of New York to London". Glancing at the pedigree of its contributing foodies, designers and so forth, it's a sure-fire success: I mean, the chef's from Mezzo, the photographic prints are by Norman Parkinson, the waitresses' uniforms are by Nicole Farhi, the paintings are by Estelle Thompson, the furniture's by John Coleman, the development consultant's David Mellor, the video wall is by ...

Hang on a tick. Can that be the David Mellor MP, the toothy philanderer with the fashion sense of Quasimodo? Yup, that'll be him. Seems an obvious choice to me. If you need a word of advice about how best to bring Manhattan high style to boring, tacky old London, he's just the man to give you one.

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Art's not so swell for Sewell

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## Danger: vacancy in the Kremlin

Russia's parliamentary elections on 17 December will take place in a climate of acute political uncertainty. Intrigue, violence and popular disillusion form the backdrop to a vote that will pose more questions than it will answer about Russia's future. The elections seem certain to produce a deeply fragmented State Duma (lower house of parliament), with no party commanding a majority. Communists, nationalists and other forces of reaction will probably perform better than liberal Westerners, but party allegiances are weak in Russia and many elected members, thirsty for government largesse, may drift into the camp of Viktor Chernomyrdin, the centrist prime minister, after they take their seats.

More significant than the elections is the drama off-stage. President Boris Yeltsin, having suffered his second heart attack of the year in late October, is still convalescing in a sanatorium outside Moscow. It seems increasingly unlikely that he will run again for office in next June's presidential election. That contest will be critically important for Russia because the constitution, introduced after Mr Yeltsin shelled an earlier rebellious parliament out of existence in 1993, gives far more power to the presidency than to the legislature. Rival politicians, including Alexander Lebed, reputed to be Russia's most popular general, Gennady Zyuganov, the Communist leader, and Grigory Yavlinsky, the liberal reformer, are already jostling for the presidential succession. They view the parliamentary elections as a way of establishing their credentials for the contest next year.

However, their behaviour has aroused the hostility of Mr Yeltsin's personal assistants – including Alexander Korzhakov, his powerful chief bodyguard – who stand to be swept from the Kremlin as soon as

the president leaves office. Certain figures in the Yeltsin entourage have even hinted that they may seek to invalidate the parliamentary elections if the result goes against Mr Chernomyrdin and the pro-government camp. Moreover, if the prime minister's party, known as Our Home Is Russia, crashes to defeat on 17 December, thus undermining the prospects of a Yeltsin or Chernomyrdin victory in June, it is conceivable that some of those closest to Mr Yeltsin will attempt to delay or cancel the presidential elections.

Such machinations would be less worrying were it not that violence seems to be turning into a permanent feature of post-Communist Russian politics. Only two days ago, three hand grenades destroyed the office of an extreme nationalist MP at the parliament building in Moscow. Four MPs have been murdered since the last elections in 1993. Many MPs routinely carry guns. The atmosphere of insecurity has been enhanced by Russia's military crackdown in Chechnya, which was launched almost exactly one year ago and has predictably generated a backlash of terrorism and sabotage. In the latest incident, a car bomb killed 11 people last Monday in Grozny, the Chechen capital.

To cap Russia's troubles, a majority of voters seem disinclined to give credit to their rulers for the fact that, at long last, the government's economic reforms are bearing fruit. Inflation is falling, the ruble is stable and mass privatisation has given millions a stake in the future. However the memory of recent hardships is still vivid. Unless popular attitudes change before June, this could prove fatal to Mr Chernomyrdin. He remains on balance the West's preferred successor to Mr Yeltsin, but the West would be wise to remember that orderly transfers of power are the exception, not the rule, in Russian history.

ANNE COOPER

## Nation shall speak cheaply unto nation

It is becoming traditional at this time of year to praise the quality of the BBC's renowned World Service and then to deplore the spending cuts imposed on that venerable organisation by a parsimonious Foreign Office. This year sees a glum new set of figures, according to which the planned Foreign Office grant of just over £169m will be pared by about £5.4m.

The Foreign Office in its own annual report says that World Service radio gains an audience of 130 million regular listeners and "enhances Britain's standing abroad and forms among listeners a better understanding of the UK". The National Audit Office, for its part, recently praised improvements in efficiency in a broadly favourable report on the World Service.

So far, this is a familiar story of beleaguered broadcasters, philistine government, bloated Foreign Office mandarins spending millions on "smoked salmon and champagne" while symbol of national glory declines, and so on.

This picture, however, is a simplification of real and important developments within the BBC. Yes, there are reductions on the way in the BBC's global coverage. Several prestigious foreign offices are due to close next year, diminishing an already rather threadbare and cheaply funded network of worldwide radio contributors, many of whom are remunerated on terms that are far from generous. Yet these particular cuts have little to do with the Foreign Office. They result from the allocation of resources

within the whole of the BBC, where there is still a wasteful duplication of effort between the World Service, the corporation's own national newsgathering service, and the burgeoning regional news operations.

Simultaneously, staff – still recovering from the necessary rigours of the drive for efficiency – report instances of junketing by managers and incongruously expensive behaviour on the part of ancillary and planning staff. Some of these stories may be unfair or apocryphal, but it would aid the BBC's case if they did not persistently combine to generate hostile newspaper headlines.

Most important, however, the future of the World Service raises questions that go to the heart of the BBC's structural dilemma. Can it continue to maintain an autonomous editorial staff and separate premises? If they should merge, as logic might dictate, what are the implications for funding? Merging the World Service with the BBC's main news and current affairs department means mixing money from the licence fee with funds direct from the taxpayer. And since World Service TV accepts advertising abroad, this mix is further leavened by commercial revenue. There has been no substantial public discussion of the implications for public accountability of this mix.

These are all matters to which the BBC must address itself if it wants to maintain a credible global radio and television presence. Blaming the Foreign Office will no longer do.

### ANOTHER VIEW

Tony Benn

## Tax cuts we cannot afford

The vote in the House of Commons on Tuesday night against the tax cuts proposed in the Budget marks an important development in the return to integrity in British politics.

Throughout the Eighties the British people were persuaded that the scale of the public services was the cause of our economic decline and that cuts in income tax were desirable, leaving the tax burden to be imposed on the poor by higher indirect taxation.

Things have moved on since then, however, and more and more people are coming to realise that the huge tax cuts made for the very richest widened the gap between the rich and poor, undermined the possibility of providing the health and education services that we need and, indeed, strangled local government, which also provides essential services.

No doubt next year, as a final gift to its wealthy supporters, the Government will make even more slashing cuts in personal taxation, hoping to leave the Treasury bare so that an incoming Labour government will lack the resources to meet people's needs.

If Labour is going to win the argument as well as the vote, it has to be quite clear about income tax and not pretend that it can be cut and that public services can be maintained and improved.

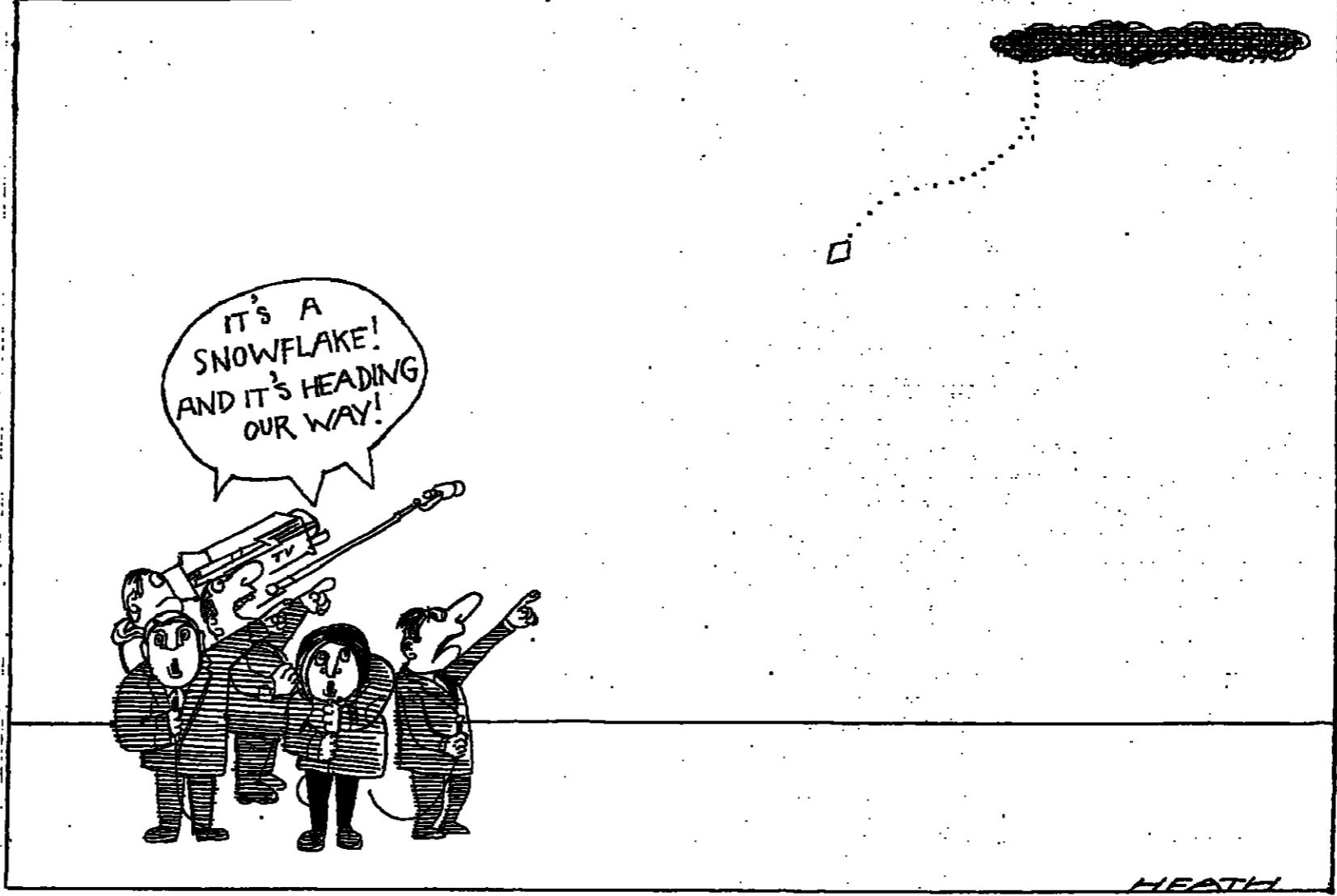
In 1959 Hugh Gaitskell gave a pledge during the election campaign that a Labour government would not increase taxation, and that statement punctured the credibility of the Labour case like a pin in the balloon, for after that, no one really believed that a Labour government could solve the problems it would inherit.

As we are seeing now in France, the international financial community is absolutely determined to destroy the welfare state in order to bring about a single currency administered by a central bank that would be free from any democratic control, and the social cost of this policy will be catastrophic.

The Labour Party now must face the harsh reality. It must bring its thinking up to date and start thinking the unthinkable again; namely, that people need to be put above profit, and must be put above the demands of international capital.

The MPs who voted against the tax cuts on Tuesday night were making a stand for the public services against the bankers who would like to take over the world. And I suspect that there is enormous support for that position among thinking people who do not want to see our social fabric destroyed.

The writer is Labour MP for Chesterfield.



Weather brings Britain to its knees

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Labour crusade to raise standards in schools

From Mr David Blunkett

Sir: Your news reports and analysis on Wednesday (6 December) suggest that the proposals in Labour's paper on education, *Excellence for Everyone*, are Tory ideas. Far from it. Our proposals build on the research carried out by those in the school improvement movement, described in your pages on Tuesday by Michael Barber ("Today's lesson: excellence"), and on the experience of schools and Labour local authorities

is what we need when our pupils perform just half as well as those in Germany, Japan and France. We are talking about equipping our nation for the challenges of a new century and a global economy. That is a task that this government has ignored in an effort to score potty party points on structures.

Because we recognise the urgency of the proposals, we will announce a series of pilot Labour authorities which will get our proposals under way – in partnership with schools, teachers, parents and governors – before the Government finally calls a general election. The Tories may be satisfied with 35th place in the world education league. Labour certainly is not.

DAVID BLUNKETT  
MP for Sheffield (Lab)  
House of Commons  
London, SW1  
6 December

The writer is shadow secretary of state for education and employment

From the Earl Russell

Sir: Is it a coincidence that Labour's plans to "improve education" by bashing teachers are announced on the same day on which, by failing to vote against the Budget tax cuts, that party has abandoned the hope of improving education by more conventional means? Like the Conservatives, Labour will need many whipping boys to carry the blame for the consequences of its own failure to spend money.

From Dr H. C. Grant, FRCP

Sir: "We need an independent assessment of the dangers posed to humans by BSE in cattle" (leading article, 6 December).

Quite. And the soothing official voices heard on the subject today are, directly or indirectly, employed by the Government or the meat industry.

Being retired, I am independent and as a neuropathologist I spent about 30 years in London's hospitals teaching about the pathology of brain diseases, including CJD. I deal in facts.

Facts are what the public are not getting and facts are what they need to help them decide whether to eat beef or not. Here are some facts:

1. BSE, CJD and scrapie (the disease in sheep that infected cattle between 1981 and 1988) are all caused by the same sinister

brain

and almost indestructible agent.

Experiments carried out on

scrapie since the last war reveal

that it is easy to transmit to many

mammals, including primates.

2. The oft-repeated official

statement that BSE cannot cause

CJD is incorrect. Correct is: "It is not known whether BSE can cause CJD." And we will not know

until about 2005 AD: if the number

of CJD cases in the UK then

suddenly jumps by, say, a factor

of 10, we shall know.

3. It is the brain that is infective – even in (outwardly healthy)

animals that are incubating the

disease. Adult cattle brains were

banned from our "meat products"

(meat pies, pâté, stock

cubes and tinned items) in

November 1989 but calves' brains

were and still are exempt although

calves may be born incubating

BSE.

The question that this genera-

ates can be phrased in two ways.

If it is safe to eat sheep, then why

should it not be safe to eat cat-

tle? Alternatively, if there is a

risk involved in eating cattle, why

should it not be greater in eat-

ing sheep?

Yours faithfully,

LES GALLOWAY

Leicester

5 December

### Sheep, cattle and CJD

From Mr Les Galloway

Sir: We are told that BSE is a form of scrapie that entered the cattle population through feed contaminated with infected sheep offal. If this is the case, then obviously the disease can cross between species and, therefore, potentially infect humans. The difficulty with this hypothesis is that there is no need to postulate cattle as an intermediate step. Scrapie has been endemic among the sheep population for generations, and if it were going to cross species with any ease, then we should have heard much more about mad sheep disease in the past, and the incidence of Kreutzfeld-Jacob disease would be much greater.

If there is anything wrong with a profession's culture, the members of the profession will change it much faster if they do not have to spend all their time asserting against the state their right to have a professional judgement of their own.

More generally, do these pro-

posals mark the point at which Labour has been made redundant? For those who do not believe in the present policies, the Liberal Democrats offer the only alternative. For those who do believe in present policies, the Conservatives, with a commitment tempered by experience, preferable to a Labour Party that would follow them with all the unwary zeal of a convert?

Yours sincerely,  
RUSSELL

House of Lords  
London, SW1  
6 December

The writer is Liberal Democrat  
social security spokesman in the  
House of Lords

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cubes and tinned items) in

November 1989 but calves' brains

were and still are exempt although

## comment

## Rebels come from every direction

Labour's left could cause trouble for a Blair government – but he might gain unexpected support

However disdainful the country may feel about politicians, surely no one can feel anything but slack-jawed admiration for the achievements of Tony Blair's spin doctors.

On Tuesday night, on the Budget vote, there was a Labour rebellion when some left-wing MPs voted against the Chancellor's tax cuts, rather than abstaining as they had been told to. Yesterday morning, this was hailed on television and radio as a personal triumph for the Labour leader.

It was a small rebellion, admittedly, and income tax is a particularly sensitive issue for the left – but a revolt is a revolt. Ten disobedient MPs is surely a mild embarrassment? There were, after all, fewer whiney Tory rebels. Yet the general mood was, in *Private Eye* speak, large ones all round. Senior Shadow Cabinet people were talking of this as a turning point in Labour history. Well, as I say, there is no arguing with success. Hats off to Clan Campbell.

But are the implications that the left is now in effect dead – that the internal socialist challenge which has been a fact of life for all Labour leaders since the Fifties finally gone for ever? Persuading the public of this is extremely important for Blair as he sells Britain "new Labour". It may have been long ago, but memories of the Bembridge uprising and union militancy are still fresh in the minds of many voters.

And the truth is that he has a compelling story to tell. It isn't that the Campaign Group, formed in 1982, has never looked weaker. The hard left has always been weak in Parliament. It is more that the political and trade-

union culture that allowed Labour leftism to flourish has largely disappeared. The proliferation of leftist groups inside the Labour Party, the moral force of CND during the Cold War, the powerful union shop stewards committee and the culture of industrial confrontation that gave all left-wing MPs their weekly cause and rally point – it has mostly gone.

The changes to the Labour Party pushed through by Neil Kinnock, John Smith and Tony Blair amount to a counter-revolution which stripped away all the power centres built up by the left, virtually dismantling the annual conference as a serious policy-making event. The National Executive Committee, where once the hard left were the biggest group, has dwindled to significance. Real policy is decided by the leadership, in private; at times it seems that Labour policy on any given subject is simply what Tony Blair says it is.

All of this puts left-wing Labour

MPs in a different position from the Bevanites, Tribunites and Campaign Groupers of the 1980s. Some of them can still pack meetings. But by comparison with previous generations of leftists they are isolated figures. Many are getting on in years. The 10 rebels this week have an average age of 57, two are in their seventies, and the two youngest are in their mid-twenties. It was hardly a teenage revolt.

But it would be foolish for Labour modernisers to relax entirely. Pre-election politics is an unreliable guide to life in office. A leftist MP who attacks the leadership now would be accused of damaging the party's chances of ending 18 years of Tory rule. Under a Labour government with a decent majority, that pressure comes

can say about any other member. Nice though it must be to have achieved guru status, however, it is a comedown from the days when he was poised to take over the Labour Party. If you want to change the world, the last thing you need from the British parliament is its affection.

One could reasonably conclude from all this that the Labour left really is dead. Some senior Labour people certainly think that. One senior Shadow Cabinet member reckons that all but nine or ten of the current Campaign Group are "biddable" – keen for that they will happen is predictable.

But it would be foolish for Labour modernisers to relax entirely. Pre-election politics is an unreliable guide to life in office. A leftist MP who attacks the leadership now would be accused of damaging the party's chances of ending 18 years of Tory rule. Under a Labour government with a decent majority, that pressure comes

off a bit. Rebellion would become glamorous again. As the Tory Maastricht rebels discovered, media enthusiasm for vivid quotes from dissident MPs on the Westminster lawn is insatiable. The airtime and coverage gives any consistent, eloquent rebel a greater status in the country and better access to voters than the average minister of state – and without the paperwork.

So I think that if a Blair Cabinet is locked in confrontation with nurses, teachers or local government staff, it is reasonable to assume that the parliamentary left will rediscover its instincts. However discouraging Blair and Gordon Brown are now, there will be a time of inflated expectations and then of expectation dashed. There will be arguments about Europe and Scotland.

This is why Blair's compelling story

is also an unfinished story. So far

the size and danger of such

rebellions are impossible to predict.

But that they will happen is predictable.

And, in a way, they need to. The

Commons is already greatly unrepresentative of the variety of British opinions – for instance, there is not a single well-known environmentalist MP, which is pretty bizarre. That is part of Parliament's problem. The less dissidence and conversation it contains, the less the Commons as an institution matters. Voting reform would mean a wider variety of opinions daring to express themselves.

Until then, however, I suspect that we will see more, not less, fracturing of party discipline as MPs respond to the market for alternative voices.

So there is a question about the

extent to which Blair could achieve all

his centralist, pro-European and reformist ambitions for office on the basis of iron discipline. He clearly wants to. He is trying to forge a hardened parliamentary force to sustain him for 10 years or more. But even the Tories have found this discipline increasingly difficult. So what if it isn't state – and without the paperwork.

I was very struck recently by hearing

a mainstream centrist Tory MP speculate about what would happen if his party lost the 1997 election and chose, in his words, a "Portillo-type leader". He would not leave the Conservative party, he said. He had been in the party too long to do that. But he and his friends might act as a "disloyal opposition". If Blair proposed something that they thought good for the country, they would be likelier to back him against his own left wing than to follow the Tory nationalist leader in the lobby against him.

An outlandish thought I know. Yet

if small groups of leftists can vot

against the party line, so can others.

It is impossible to imagine Blair rid

ing different voting coalitions in the

Commons on different issues, countering

leftist rebellions on, say, constitu

tional votes by using Liberal

Democrat support and turning at

other times to pro-European Tories?

That is a kind of politics we can

scarcely imagine today. It would return

the Commons to the time before it was

dominated by rigidly predictable two-

party whipping. It would create a

more fluid and more interesting par

liamentary politics. And it would be,

to use Blair's phrase of the moment,

impeccably One Nation.

At this very moment the French nation is tearing itself apart over the question of social welfare. Canada, which

has perhaps the worst deficit

and debt problems of all the top

nations, is seriously worried

over the level of spending on

welfare and is thinking of dras

tic steps to reduce it. It will come

as no surprise to anyone to

learn that our own government

is running scared about the

amount it spends on the welfare

state, and that the US adminis

tration is in the same mood.

All through the Western

world, regimes are taking a

good hard look at the huge

amount of money they are pay

ing on people who need it, but

who don't seem to deserve it.

The poor and the needy, in

other words.

"Yes, I'm afraid so," sighs

Professor Jean-Paul Sutre, visit

ing the University of Wexford. "The

unspoken agreement that pros

perous governments should

look after their poorer con

stituents is beginning to break

down. The more people clamor

for attention, the less likely

they are to get it. That is what

the struggle in France is all

about at the moment."

But surely this has always

gone on: students have always

fought for more grants, the

unemployed have fought for

more benefits, the homeless

have always demanded a roof?

"It's true. What is different

is that governments are begin

ning to turn round and put two

fingers up at them. And govern

ments are beginning to put in

practice their own secret

solutions."

Could Professor Sutre per

haps elaborate on that?

"Certainly," says Professor

Sutre, sliding back in his chair,

propping two fingers under his

chin and looking ever inch a

professor about to deliver a

world-shaking message. "Think

of my native France again for a

moment. Here we have one of

the most civilised nations in

the world. Yet from time to

time it is thrown into the utmost

paroxysm of change. Two hundred

years ago, we had the

French Revolution. Then we had

the kings back. Then we threw

the kings out and became a

republic. Then ... but you get

my point. France is capable of

violent change, *non?*

Oui.

"Now, tell me what happened in

the French Revolution."

They cut the king's head off?

"Yes, but that by itself is not

revolutionary. After all, you

English cut your king's head off

in 1648, but 12 years later

everything was back to normal.

You never really had a revolu

tion. What happened in the

French Revolution of true sig

nificance was that they also cut

the aristocrats' heads off. It was

I can't wait.

"Then you get the secret

thought: maybe ... maybe get

rid of them."

But how would that be pos

sible? Surely there would be an

outcry if it started already.

"Il has started already, mon

ami. The amount of deaths on

the roads goes up. The amount of

new diseases goes up. The

amount of bombs being ex

ploded in Paris goes up. Pollution,

mad cow disease, AIDS ... all

these things are part of a

conspiracy to cut down the

population.

"Of course, it is really war

that reduces population best.

But wars are very expensive.

Accidents and disease are so

much better in the long run."

The professor really thinks

this is happening in France?

"If it happens at all, it must

happen in France. I love you, mon

ami, the French are much

better at getting things done.

That is why we have a TGV and

you do not. That is why we have

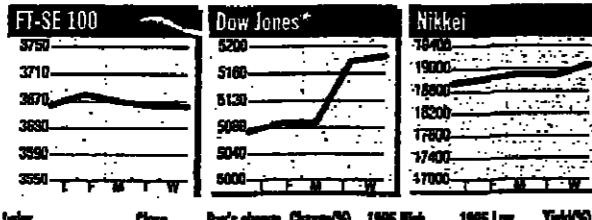
a nuclear programme. Think of



## unit trusts/data

## MARKET SUMMARY

### STOCK MARKETS



Index	Close	Day's change	Change '94	1995 High	1995 Low	Yield '95
FTSE 100	3662.80	-1.40	-0.0	3880.40	2954.20	3.92
FTSE 250	3959.90	-9.40	-0.2	3991.30	3300.90	3.49
FTSE 350	1814.30	-1.50	-0.1	1821.50	931.00	3.83
FT Small Cap	1980.89	-3.32	-0.2	1993.11	1678.61	3.31
FT All Share	1788.24	-1.50	-0.1	1794.95	1489.23	3.79
New York*	5185.76	+8.31	+0.2	5186.76	4693.70	2.30
Tokyo	19087.86	+188.33	+1.0	19584.04	14465.41	0.791
Hong Kong	9888.69	-7.48	-0.8	10032.93	6987.93	3.651
Frankfurt	2267.18	+6.19	+0.3	2317.01	1910.98	1.981
Paris	1834.75	+19.88	+1.1	2017.27	1700.58	3.271
Milan	8880.00	+133.00	+1.5	9911.00	8757.00	1.821

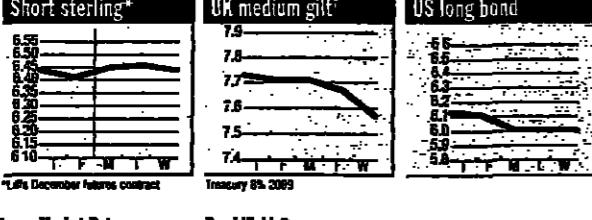
\*New Jones Index. & Graph at 1990 levels

117/125 World Index Yields

### MAIN PRICE CHANGES

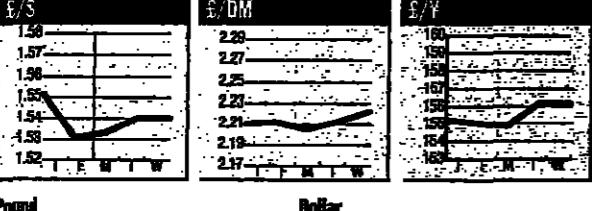
FTSE 350 companies (including investment trusts)	Index	Price (p)	Change (p)	% Change
Beriford	190	17	9.8	8.1
Trafalgar Hse	28.3	1.8	6.6	6.7
Smith(DS)	266	12	4.7	3.5
BTP	271	12	4.6	3.4
Scots Hldgs	599	24	4.2	3.1

INTEREST RATES

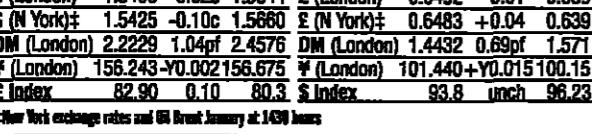


Money Market Rates	Index	1 Month	1 Year	Median Yield (30 Year Ago)	Long Yield (30 Year Ago)
UK	6.63	6.31	7.37	8.57	7.54
US	5.88	5.41	5.63	7.81	5.98
Japan	0.28	0.38	2.57	4.61	-
Germany	4.19	3.81	6.04	7.40	6.38

Benchmark Indexes



CURRENCIES



Other Indicators

Source: FT Information

## IN BRIEF

### Payout for former Post Office chief

Bill Cockburn, the former chief executive of the Post Office who left to join WH Smith last month, has received a lump sum of £285,542 from his previous employer. In a response to a Labour Party question in the House of Commons, the Government said the payment was allowed under the Post Office pension rules and was equivalent to three times his annual pension.

### Vymura issues warning

Vymura, the wallpaper manufacturer, warned that second-half profits will be "substantially below" last year's level. Trading has been hit by a combination of flat sales, difficulties in recovering raw material price increases and higher support costs, the company said. However, subject to the trading outlook in spring 1996, it remains Vymura's intention to maintain the level of final dividend for the full year 1995.

### Littlewoods fight to continue

Barry Dale, the former Littlewoods chief executive who has launched a £1.2bn offer for the company, has vowed to fight on if he loses a crucial vote on his proposals today. The Moores family, which controls the company, is due to vote on his offer at an emergency meeting at the company's head office in Liverpool. Although Mr Dale has some support he is expected to lose the vote that would allow him access to the company's books. A rival £1.1bn offer from N Brown, the mail order group, and Iceland, the frozen food retailer, is also expected to be discussed.

### Boost for Kingfisher

Sales at Kingfisher, the B&Q and Superdrug group, have risen by 4.8 per cent on a like-for-like basis in the three months to October. Woolworths sales have recovered after a poor August. Sales at Comet were up by 3 per cent but B&Q is finding the market tougher. Its sales were flat as a result of the sluggish housing market. Superdrug is performing better as it continues to move more towards health and beauty products.

### Hard marketing lifts car sales

New UK car sales leapt by 12.77 per cent to 143,055 vehicles last month - but manufacturers said the increase reflected aggressive marketing rather than a sudden return of the "feel-good" factor. It was the second month running to show an increase, according to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders.

### No fresh runway plans from BAA

BAA, the airports operator, has no plans or proposals for another runway in south-east England within its present planning horizons, Michael Maine, technical director, told MPs on the Select Transport Committee yesterday. He told the meeting that the proposed terminal 5 at Heathrow would be "the correct answer to the UK airport capacity question". Mr Maine also encouraged the Government to encourage greater use of other UK airports including Luton and Stansted.

### Taylor moves in at Charter

Martin Taylor, the recently retired vice-chairman of Hanson, has been appointed deputy chairman of Charter, the welding supplies to mining equipment group. The move follows April's announcement that Sir Michael Edwards was to step down as chairman of Charter next year, to be replaced by Jeffrey Herbert, currently chief executive.

## Forte's defence bill could exceed £35m

### JOHN SHEPHERD

The besieged Forte hotels group is continuing to recruit more advisers, and looks set to run up a defence bill of more than £35m in its struggle to defeat the hostile £3.3bn takeover bid from Granada.

Since Sunday, Forte, headed by Sir Rocco Forte, has enlisted additional help from Roberto Mendoza, vice president of JP Morgan, and Cenovate, the City public relations firm. The merchant banker reckoned that the merchant banks and stock-

brokers would cost Forte between £25m and £30m, excluding expenses. Accountants and solicitors would cost at least £2m to £3m. Brunswick £1m, and Makinson Cowell another £500,000. Forte is also having its hotel estate revalued which he estimated would cost around £1m.

The defence team also includes two other merchant bankers, SBC Warburg and Morgan Stanley, the US stockbroking firm, and Brunswick, the City public relations firm. The merchant banker reckoned that the merchant banks and stock-

brokers would cost Forte between £25m and £30m, excluding expenses. Accountants and solicitors would cost at least £2m to £3m. Brunswick £1m, and Makinson Cowell another £500,000. Forte is also having its hotel estate revalued which he estimated would cost around £1m.

Forte declined to comment on how much its defence would cost. If £35m is an accurate figure it equates to about 27 per cent of Forte's taxable profits of £127m in the last full year. IBCA, the credit rating

agency, yesterday expressed concern about Forte's plan to split into two should it defeat Granada. The agency said it had placed long and short-term debt ratings of Forte on "rating watch" with negative implications.

There were also widespread rumours that Forte's meeting with institutions in Scotland on Tuesday had not gone well. "We've heard that shareholders were unhappy that Forte had not seen them for months... and we also heard that one shareholder

said Forte would be better off selling trophy hotels and investing the proceeds in gilts," said one City dealer.

Forte's shares fell a further 0.5p to 337.5p, while Granada advanced 2p more to 655p. That improved Granada's cash and share terms from 330.5p to 331.5p per Forte share - just 6.2p off the current market price. Analysts said that Forte would have to produce a "very strong" defence document to stem the negative tide.

Meanwhile, Forte continues to sell off unwanted businesses.

The latest to go is Griners, the wine merchant, sold to Matthew Clark for £22m.

Granada chief executive Gerry Robinson pointed out that Griners made only £1m on turnover £76m, compared with the £5.3m Clark made from its Freightaders operation on £121m turnover. "Before you sell a business you have to get operating profits up, otherwise you're selling on the cheap."

Mr Robinson also promised to retain Forte shareholders' perks. Gold Card hotel discounts would be honoured.

## Crunch day as Eggar steps into gas row

### MARY FAGAN

Industrial Correspondent

The Government will today step into the row between British Gas and its potential rivals. It has summoned British Gas to a crunch meeting that will include the industry watchdog, Clare Spottiswoode, following allegations that the company is dragging its heels over the introduction of domestic competition in April next year. Cedric Brown, chief executive of British Gas, may also attend in an attempt to resolve the issue.

Competitors to British Gas, including North Sea producers and electricity companies, believe that British Gas is deliberately trying to delay competition on the grounds that the arrangements needed to cope with multiple suppliers will not be in place. The meeting has been called

by Tim Eggar, the minister for energy and industry, who is determined that competition for up to 500,000 households in the South-west of England will be available from 1 April. It will then be extended to two million homes in 1997, with the market open nationally in 1998. Ms Spottiswoode, who is believed to be increasingly angered by British Gas's attitude, is also likely to oppose vociferously any slippage in the timetable. According to one industry source: "When politics and companies get mixed, who knows what the outcome will be. This is likely to be a very important meeting."

The row primarily involves the British Gas pipeline subsidiary, Transco, whose relationship with



Keeping a grip: Steve Wilcox, chief executive (right), and Hamish McPhie, finance director, of Avon Rubber, the automotive components to tyres group that has motored ahead despite some weakening in its markets. Pre-tax profits jumped from £13.2m to £16.2m in the year to September. The dividend rises 7 per cent to 17.7p.

Photograph: John Lawrence

## Six sink in Footsie shake-up

### TOM STEVENSON

Deputy City Editor

Six companies learned yesterday that they have lost their coveted status in the FTSE 100 in the biggest shake-up for two years in the index of Britain's leading shares. Victims of the Stock Exchange's strict formula for inclusion slip out of the Footsie on 18 December when they will face a wave of selling pressure from tracker funds whose portfolios are designed to reflect exactly movements in the various indices.

The number of changes in the latest quarterly review was boosted by the Exchange's decision to remove Inchcape, the lowest-ranked company in the index, to accommodate the inclusion of the National Grid, which will be a FTSE 100 company from the start of dealing on Monday. Inchcape's departure, after four years in the index, follows a disastrous share price performance which left it as only the 130th-largest quoted company.

A side effect of the flotation of the Grid has been the removal of both London and Midlands Electricity, whose market values have been hit by the transfer to shareholders of their stakes in the electricity transmission business. Other

companies to drop out include Sears, one of the original constituents when Footsie was devised in 1984. Despite the best efforts of the chief executive, Liam Strong, Sears has struggled with a disparate array of retail brands. Arjo Wiggins also falls out, as does De La Rue, which fell foul of investors last week after it warned that higher-than-forecast results in the past had fuelled unrealistic expectations.

Winners from this quarter's switch include Pilkington, which has benefited from new management and an upturn in its construction and automotive cycles. Smiths Industries, Argos and Foreign & Colonial Investment Trust.

Burton, which rejoins the index after an absence of five years, has been guided back to the top flight by its American chief executive, John Hoerner, who took over in 1992. He has moved the group away from a culture of permanent discounts.

Under Stock Exchange rules all quoted companies are ranked by market capitalisation once a quarter. Any company whose share price rise has placed it higher than 90th in the league table automatically gains entrance to Footsie. Companies slipping below 110th place automatically fall out.

There is also talk about a Hollywood movie about the affair, although Leeson's Singapore lawyer, John Koh, said earlier this week that no deal had yet been signed.

Leeson's lawyers have until the beginning of next week to decide on whether to appeal against sentence. Family and friends had expected a lighter sentence since he pleaded guilty on a reduced count of charges.

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## COMMENT

This is the nightmare scenario that accountants and their insurance brokers have been predicting for much of this decade:

## Binder judgment underlines case for reform

The accountancy profession will hardly welcome it, but yesterday's £65m judgment against Binder Hamlyn is the best piece of evidence it can point to in its campaign for a change in the law relating to auditors' liability. Here is the nightmare scenario that accountants and their insurance brokers have been predicting for much of this decade. Because of a shortfall in the firm's professional indemnity insurance cover – caused by insurers' unwillingness to take on such big risks in the face of mounting litigation – more than 100 partners face having to meet £34m of the claim. The judgment is being appealed, but if a year from now it stands, some prominent accountants might be made personally bankrupt.

Well, almost. This case is complicated by the fact that much of Binder Hamlyn has, since late 1994, been part of the immensely successful US-based Arthur Andersen. Having acquired it because of its UK audit business, Arthur Andersen is unlikely to want to cast the Binder people off. But nor, as rival firms were quick to point out, is it likely to dip into its pocket to bail them out. That would, in the words of one partner at another practice, be a "more than generous gesture". Ultimately, ADT would probably be better off agreeing a deal under which the money is paid off over time, rather than forcing the partners out of homes and callings.

The wider implications are somewhat easier to assess. Irrespective of the final result, the case can only accelerate the rush

to incorporate begun earlier this year by KPMG, Britain's largest audit firm. Indeed, the signs are that the coming weeks, if not days, will see many other leading firms delivering their responses to KPMG's attempt to protect itself from huge negligence suits in this way.

There are still doubts over how KPMG's decision to incorporate only its audit arm will work. If Binder had been totally incorporated at the time of the deal that landed it in court, the liability would have been limited to the firm's assets, and the individual partner responsible, rather than scores of others with no connection to the transaction. Even this may be no more than a partial solution, however.

With this case fresh in its mind, the profession will be hoping that the Law Commission, which is studying options for reform of the law of joint and several liability, might provide a more elegant way out of the problem. It has long pressed changes to a principle under which its members can find themselves bearing the whole cost of a corporate disaster.

### Cold comfort from Chancellor Kohl

The only good thing from Jacques Chirac's point of view about his meeting today with Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor, has to be its venue. The French presi-

dent, who has been watching Paris burn from the distant vantage point of Bonn, will be sorely tempted by the diversions of Baden-Baden. Perhaps a little birching in the sauna before taking the waters, or a flutter at the tables – anything but having to subject himself to Helmut's stern gaze.

Around the time of their last meeting, the Germans had privately begun referring to France as the "patient". It was this sort of talk that finally prompted Mr Chirac to decide, after months of shilly-shallying, that cutting the public deficit was his priority of priorities. Now the priority is being acted upon, and the patient is in high fever. But Mr Chirac is likely to look in vain for any meaningful act of sympathy. He will get, of course, the solemn affirmation of Franco-German solidarity on everything, which in any case is always recycled as a matter of course at these summits.

On substance, however, Mr Kohl can afford to be at his most self-righteous. Despite the burden of unification, equivalent to transferring to the east each year some 5 per cent of GDP, Germany has succeeded, through the recession of 1993 and 1994, in driving down its public deficit to below the Maastricht criteria level. France and Britain, in more favourable economic conditions, have failed to achieve as much. Kenneth Clarke has just pushed back his deficit reduction timetable by another year, so that Britain should come in under the 3 per cent bar in 1997.

President Chirac, however, has less room for such sleight of hand – stepping up to the mark on EMU is a matter of honour, and the pressure of international market scrutiny is that much greater on France. The biggest problem is that the French economy is crawling along on annualised GDP growth of under 1 per cent, and unemployment is rising again, hardly ideal fundamentals for deficit-slashing. That was the whole point of the convergence criteria. They were not meant to offer choice, just Teutonic virtue.

### Bass's bigger splash proves a winner

It has taken a long time for the City to come round to Sir Ian Prosser's view of the world, but finally he seems to be winning over the sceptics. Over the past year, Bass shares have outperformed the rest of the stock market by around a tenth; support for the stock is growing by leaps and bounds. It was not always thus. When it splashed out more than £1bn on the Holiday Inn hotel chain in 1989, there were cries of horror. Why on earth was a brewer expanding into hotels, was the question on everyone's lips.

Bass's approach to the beer orders – to sell most of its tied estate as rapidly as possible – drew an equally hostile response. Both strategies are in the process of being vindicated. Holiday Inn is producing all the right numbers while the company's swift and

robust response to the beer orders has succeeded in wrong-footing most competitors.

There is still some residual doubt about whether such a powerful brewer should be expanding into the leisure industry as aggressively as Bass is, but even this is beginning to go. The main strands of the leisure market are rapidly converging. Sir Ian's vision of a company that tries to tap profitably into all aspects of discretionary spending and personal leisure time, be that pubs, bingo halls, betting shops or fitness centres, must be the right one. Bass is proving to be a master of extracting the last penny of loose change from customers' pockets. Selective bolt-on acquisitions – such as the recent purchase of the Harvester pub chain – have enriched

the ability to throw £10m of capital spending a week at existing businesses underlines the company's financial strength. The result of the high capital spending in the year to 30 September was an 11.3 per cent leap in taxable profits to £599m, despite the effects of the lottery. Analysts have pencilled in £650m for next year. With gearing at just 23 per cent, Bass plainly has scope for a big acquisition. Anything is possible, but the current rumour, Ladbrooke, seems unlikely. Bass simply does not need hotel property assets like Ladbrooke's. Much more logical would be Carlsberg Tetley, but the rationalisation of the beer industry involved might be too much even for this Government's relaxed approach to mergers policy.

## NFC admits to failures as group profits collapse

TOM STEVENSON  
Deputy City Editor

NFC ate humble pie in the City yesterday, admitting that the group's potential had failed to be realised in all its divisions and acknowledging that one of the main challenges facing the new chief executive, Gerry Murphy, was a complete change of culture. The City fretted about the pace of reform, downgrading profits forecasts by £10m to £95m and knocking 10p, or 7 per cent, off the company's shares.

At 139p, the shares have more than halved since the beginning of last year, further tarnishing the employee co-operative dream that began with a workers' buyout from the government in 1982 and brought the company to the stock market three years later. After a honky-tonk period in the early 1980s, falling profits and bitter boardroom rows have proven that NFC is just another company operating in cut-throat markets.

Figures for the 12 months to September, already struggling under tighter operating margins, were scarred by a £25m exceptional provision to cover head reductions, loss-making businesses and the write-off of

"non-performing assets". Mr Murphy, who took over at the top after the company had spent a fruitless six months looking for a new chief, said 1,000 jobs had gone since the restructuring began although these had been offset by recruitment in other areas of the business.

Mr Murphy replaced Peter Sherlock, who was similarly brought in by the company to restore its previous fortunes but fell foul of an old guard unwilling to carry through his radical recommendations. Yesterday's figures were presented as the result of the previous regime's mismanagement but attention is focused on how quickly Mr Murphy can transform the company.

He now runs a business that has in effect severed all links with the old ideal of a shares-owning co-operative. In October, employee shareholders lost the double voting rights they had enjoyed since the flotation of the former National Freight Corporation.

The extra voting powers designed to protect employees were lost after their shareholding dipped below 10 per cent. At privatisation, NFC workers and their families owned more than 80 per cent of the company.

## Bass keep City guessing on acquisition

JOHN SHEPHERD

Bass yesterday kept the City guessing about whether it was on the verge of making a large acquisition. The giant hotels and drinks group declined to comment on the specific speculation over the past week that it was considering a bid for Ladbrooke, the betting shops and Hilton hotels company.

Sir Ian Prosser, chairman and chief executive, did hint, however, that Bass would be prepared to make a big bid if the right opportunity arose. An incoming better-than-expected

full-year profits of £599m, he said, there would more than likely be further consolidation in the brewing industry in the wake of Scottish & Newcastle's recent acquisition of Courage.

Analysts interpreted that comment as a sign that Bass was interested in buying Carlsberg Tetley, the third-largest brewer, which is jointly owned by Allied Domecq and Carlsberg of Denmark.

A resurfacing of rumours that Sir Christopher Hogg is in line to succeed Michael Jackson as chairman of Allied Domecq also fuelled speculation

that Allied would eventually be broken up, starting with the sale of Carlsberg Tetley.

Sir Ian again declined to comment on this particular piece of speculation, but openly admitted that Bass was losing a small amount of market share in addition to being topped from pole position in the brewing league by S&N.

However, he stressed that "size was not everything" and it was more important to grow strategically and through product innovation. The City imbibed that message fully yesterday and marked the

shares up 26p to a high of 695p.

Analysts upgraded forecasts on the news that Bass had increased pre-tax profits by 11.3 per cent to £599m in the year to 30 September and raised the dividend total by 7.6 per cent to 22.7p. The City expects Bass to make profits of about £650m in the current year and £710m in 1996/97.

The main driver behind the profits growth was the franchised Holiday Inns business, which operates 2,080 hotels with 370,000 rooms. Operating profits from the hotels climbed

8.6 per cent to £164m. A further 487 hotels will be added to the chain in the next 18 months, most of them in the US.

The company's brewing and pub operations also had a good year, with operating profits from pubs up from £20m to £24m, and brewing profits improved from £140m to £145m.

But the hot summer and the effect of the National Lottery hit the leisure operations. Galahad clubs saw profits dip £4m to £36m, and Coral betting shops returned a static £17m.

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Drinking trends, page 4

The shock decision on Binder Hamlyn will prompt a rush for limited liability, writes John Willcock

## Court decision to spark stampede of accountants

Binder audited Britannia, and signed off its audit in October 1989 with Britannia's net assets listed as £36.5m. The firm had further contact with Britannia until 5 January 1990 when it asked a Binder partner to attend a meeting with ADT, which wanted to buy the company.

The High Court case hinged on ADT's claim that Martyn Bishop, audit partner of Binder, assumed responsibility to ADT for the professional competence with which they had been prepared and I have held that ADT relied on what

per cent would lead to an agreed takeover.

An ADT director, John Jerome, told the court that at the crucial meeting Mr Bishop had told him that he had no reason to change his mind over the BSG accounts, which showed a true and fair view of the company's financial position.

Mr Justice May said in his judgment: "I judged Mr Jerome's oral evidence to be generally quite impressive and entirely credible. I was less impressed with Mr Bishop's credibility."

He said that if Mr Bishop had qualified his statements on BSG, ADT would have taken stock.

The more serious the qualification, the less likely it would have been that ADT would have proceeded with the bid on the terms then contemplated.

On Binder's information, ADT believed that a premium over the BSG share price of 25

per cent would have been paid for the company.

Mr Bishop said that on 5.1.90 Mr Bishop stood by the accounts and thereby assumed responsibility to ADT for the professional competence with which they had been prepared and I have held that ADT relied on what

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Mr Bishop said.

"Insofar as Binder's admit that they were in certain respects negligent in the auditing and certification of those accounts, it follows that they were in breach of the responsibility which I have held that they assumed."

The decision has alarmed other accountancy firms. Although KPMG has already sought to escape crippling professional indemnity insurance rates by switching from partnership to limited liability status, other are now under severe pressure to follow suit.

The managing partner of one leading accountancy firm said that the ADT award would inevitably spur the move towards incorporation. "I don't think it's a sea change – but it's certainly a high crested wave."

Arthur Andersen itself looks to have escaped any liability for the award. Former Binder partners who wound up at Stoy Hayward and Grant Thornton may not be so lucky. There was considerable confusion on this point last night.

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Ashcroft: Case related to sale of his car auction firm

Comment, page 25

# business

## THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

Edited by TOM STEVENSON

# Carlton finds winning formula

Carlton Communications was little more than a stock market tipsheet publisher called Fleet Street Letter when Michael Green arrived in the 1980s. The transformation since then has been remarkable. First Mr Green turned the company into one of the wonder stocks of the subsequent stock market boom and, more impressively, has since created one of the most respected media stocks of the 1990s.

The turning point was winning the London weekday ITV franchise from Thames in 1993, which was quickly followed by the £75m agreed takeover of Central, the Midlands broadcaster. Together these have created the network's leading supplier of programmes just at the time when television advertising is back in demand.

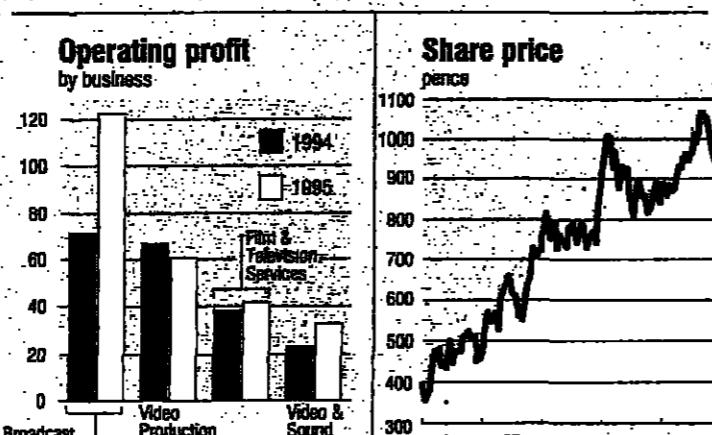
The result was to raise profits before exceptions by 39 per cent to £254m in the year to September, before a £7m loss on the sale of two small businesses in the period. Shareholders share in the spoils, with a dividend raised 14 per cent to 23.6p, after a final of 14.3p.

Carlton had some residual down-effect from the acquisition of Central part-way through 1994, which flattened the latest figures, but underlying profits are still up 30 per cent. The timing of the Central deal looks excellent. Carlton has had the best year for advertising for many years, raising revenues 9 per cent during the past 12 months, against an ITV market up 7 per cent. The company has cashed in on the recovery and has also won market share from its arch-rival London Weekend Television in the capital's ferociously competitive advertising market. The combination of both franchises' advertising arms in Carlton UK Sales, now commanding 32 per cent of ITV advertising revenue, has obviously been a winning formula.

Profits from the core television operation soared from £71.6m to £123m, a momentum that will clearly be difficult to sustain. Some media buyers are looking forward to continued growth in advertising revenues of around 6 or 7 per cent, but City analysts are more cautious, with James Capel expecting something nearer 5 per cent.

Carlton has a firm base in the UK, making 27 per cent of ITV programmes by value and having already been recommissioned for seven of this year's top 10 drama productions. The idea is to build on that foundation, moving into new areas like cable and satellite at home and new regions, such as recent deals in France and Singapore. So far the picture is mixed. Continued losses at Carlton Home Entertainment and a squeeze on margins hit the videocassette operation, cutting profits by 9 per cent to £60.7m.

Carlton Communications: at a glance					
	Market value: £2.32bn, share price £10.03				
Five-year record	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Turnover (£bn)	0.54	0.64	1.00	1.40	1.58
Pre-tax profits (£m)	88.8	100	128	190	247
Earnings per share (pence)	25.4	38.4	42.0	50.5	60.0
Dividends per share (pence)	15.5	17.0	18.7	20.7	23.6



Further growth may be limited by new technologies.

Capel's forecast of £292m group profits this year would put the shares up 3p at £10.03, on a forward multiple of 14. Reasonable value.

## Costs key to NFC's future

These were appalling figures from NFC, a fact the company admits freely, as new management are wont to do – it is their last chance to blame someone else. The question facing investors is the extent to which the slump in tax profit in the year to October is a reflection of the previous regime's incompetence or the fundamental unattractiveness of the markets in which NFC operates.

The figures, showing pre-tax profits from £105.6m to £38.6m, earnings per share a miserable 2p compared to last time's 11.2p and the full-year dividend badly uncovered at 7.1p, are largely irrelevant because, predictably, this was a kitchen sink job, including £35m of exceptional provisions to cover the new chief executive Gerry Murphy's restructuring.

On the face of it, he appears to be doing the right things, including a sensible sub-division of the £1bn-turnover

Profit forecasts were trimmed

Now, customers are more sophisticated and the market too heavily supplied for anything but wafer-thin margins. As operating profits of £88.8m on sales of £2.3bn confirm, returns are unappealing. But not everything can be levelled at the state of the market. Sales are not NFC's problem (they rose 7 per cent in the year), but getting a decent return on them and on assets employed (NFC's chosen measure) is a bigger challenge, given the fixed nature of the contracts that are its stock in trade.

Obligations stretching out three or even five years must be met, even if the terms are unfavourable, which means the only option open to NFC is to cut its cloth to match prevailing conditions. A thousand jobs have gone already since Mr Murphy's restructuring began in the summer but many more have come on board with, for example, the joint venture distribution company with Bass. Keeping the lid on costs in a company employing 37,000 around the world is the key to transforming this old paternalistic behemoth into a lean, commercial enterprise.

With profits of £37m forecast this year, the shares stand on a forward rating of less than 12. Attractive.

sharp to about £95m, putting the shares on a prospective price/earnings ratio of 14 at the current 139p, down 10p. If this is a genuine recovery stock that is good value, but in a tough market the risks are high. Fairly priced.

## Berisford sees return to profit

The re-shaping of Berisford, the former commodities group, has progressed a fair distance since Alan Bowkett took control in 1992, though it has not been without setbacks.

The old commodities businesses such as British Sugar have long gone. Other peripheral interests such as Euro-trailer, a rentals operation, were disposed of last year for a total of £24m. Still to go are the agribusiness division and some properties that are being smartened up for sale.

Berisford now has two legs: Magnet kitchens and joinery division, which was bought nearly two years ago, and the American catering equipment business, Welbilt, which was acquired earlier this year.

Given the problems in the housing market and the string of dire announcements that have come from other DIY and building materials companies, the market was braced for bad news yesterday. Berisford shares plunged 15 per cent in June following a Magnet-induced profits warning.

In fact, the outcome was better than feared, pushing the shares up 17p to 190p. Pre-tax profits for the year to September were £26.9m after last year's £3.2m loss. It is Berisford's first full-year profit for five years.

Though operating in tough conditions, Magnet is performing creditably. Its profits increased from £6.2m to £10.2m though there has been some sacrifice in the margin over the second half. Costs have been cut via job losses and a factory closure. But £12m has been invested in a new distribution fleet and refurbished showrooms.

Welbilt turned in £28m in its first period and looks a good deal. Welbilt is hoping to ride on the back of the fast-food expansion world-wide.

With £1.1m net cash Berisford can easily fund expansion. Targets are likely to be smaller building supplies businesses whose products can be sold through Magnet's 200 outlets. At Welbilt the moves are likely to be in related areas such as a commercial dishwasher manufacturer.

With profits of £37m forecast this year, the shares stand on a forward rating of less than 12. Attractive.

So Andrew Tuckey has not been demoted to a broom cupboard in the basement of the new Barings building. That story now appears to have been put about for the benefit of the Bank of England.

The former deputy chairman of Britain's oldest bank – who resigned "as a matter of honour" after failing to spot a £900m loss – is in fact enjoying a spacious office on the executive floor. This in spite of promises from the Bank of England Governor, Eddie George, that he would need his approval to work again in the City.

"It may look like a large office but he is sharing it with someone," says a Barings man who appears embarrassed by the presence of the man known as Teflon. Now a consultant to the bank's corporate finance arm Mr Tuckey is still the subject of a Securities and Futures Association investigation.

"You should not be on this floor and you should not be looking in that direction," says the banker. Sorry.

Berisford makes a second strategic blunder in its bid to stay

## Simon Pincombe CITY DIARY

# Former Barings chief comes out of the closet

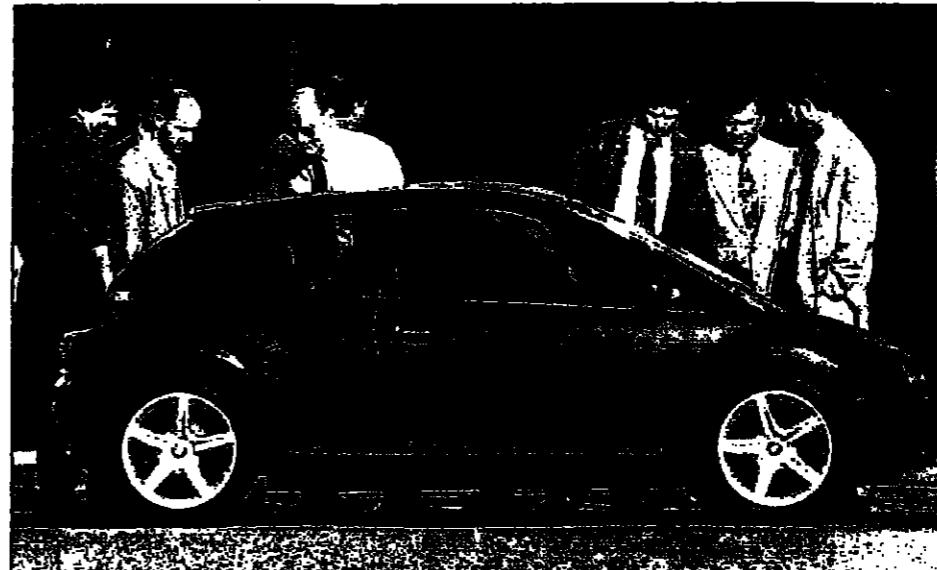
penalty takes effect from next April and applies to those "making and selling fake VAT invoices". Any tax officials implicated in VAT fraud will also be executed.

But that is not an end to the matter. The authorities have also cut VAT export rebates, claiming that it would take China two years to pay off its unpaid rebates.

"I want to say I am sorry," said Xiang Huisicheng, deputy director of the nation's taxation administration. "The Ministry of Finance does not have the money."

Michael Green, the cigar-chomping chairman of Carlton Communications, is suitably undriven by the news that the independent Television Commission is to give a total of £800,000 back to the 16 ITV companies in the form of licence fee rebates. "It will pay for my children's school fees," sniffs the media mogul, "but it's not going to double the share price."

One wonders which lofty establishment Mr Green's children go to.



And finally – news reaches us from BMW, which is trying to convince the City that its four-year-old electric car (above) is the vehicle to be seen in. Created by the propeller heads at BMW Technik, the maker's design centre, the E1 made its debut at the 1991 Frankfurt Motor Show. But with another hike in petrol duty you never know your luck. So proud are the Germans that they are wheeling it out again to mark BMW Technik's 10th birthday.

## Stripping off Clarke's bikini

Statistics are like bikinis, Kenneth Clarke told the Tory Party conference, as he teased them with hints about a tax-cutting Budget: more interesting for what they conceal than what they reveal. Could he have had his own Budget in mind? The vital statistics that made the headlines were not all that they seemed.

Despite the big increase in the forecast for public borrowing next year, the Chancellor succeeded in portraying his Budget as cautious by claiming he had found the money for his £3bn tax giveaway by matching spending cuts. On both counts Mr Clarke is open to challenge.

Labour's jibe of 7p up, 1p down was too charitable. Compared with the position this year, Mr Clarke hardly cut taxes at all. For one thing, the rise in road fuel and tobacco duties will bring in an extra £1.3bn. This is not altered by the fact that they were pre-announced, in the form of an intention to raise them in real terms by 5 and 3 per cent a year respectively in the 1993 Budget.

Then there is the increase in the council tax which is implied by the Government's own projections. Tony Travers, an expert in local government at the LSE, expects rises of 8-9 per cent. This is what the Treasury itself seems to be projecting, with council tax revenues set to rise by £700m to £29.9bn next year.

Taking these two sources of revenue into account, Mr Clarke's giveaway of £3bn is reduced to a billion. But it isn't only his claim to have cut taxes that does not stand up to scrutiny. For the Chancellor didn't hold the line on expenditure to anything like the extent he suggested.

On the surface, the clamp-

down on spending looks as impressive as the rhetoric. Against a background in which real public spending has risen at an annual rate of almost 2 per cent in the past 15 years, the Treasury's objective for the next financial year certainly appears tough. The control total – which excludes debt interest and cyclically varying social security payments – is set to fall by almost 1 per cent.

But delve more deeply into the details and doubts creep in. Included in the control total of £260bn next year is a cut in the housing budget of about half a billion pounds, which comes from the first tranche in the sell-off in the Housing Corporation's loan portfolio. The Department of Transport's budget also gains by about a billion pounds from the sale of the rolling stock companies, after a boost of £300m this year to £1.9bn next year.

The cost to the taxpayer is postponed until the services derived from PFI contracts become available, but the bill will eventually be presented.

Then there is the lottery to consider. So far the effect of the Government's sparkling new stream of revenue – this time a cut that does not speak its name – has been simply to flatten the PSER. Next year, however, the distribution fund begins to shell out money in earnest. Lottery expenditure is poised to rise from £300m this year to £1.4bn in 1996/7.

Last June, the Chancellor redefined the Government's overall expenditure target to exclude spending financed by the lottery. But the Treasury does take account of it in its presentation of public capital spending, which in its absence would fall in real terms by 13 per cent next year rather than the 8 per cent decline shown in the Red Book. As we saw in the clash between William Waldegrave and Virginia Bottomley before the Budget, the Chief Secretary, for one, sees the

availability of lottery finance as a reason for cutting departmental spending.

What happens when we include these elements in the public spending totals? The control total, when adjusted to take account of the privatisation proceeds from the housing corporation loan book and the rolling stock companies, together with planned PFI spending, is flat in real terms rather than spending offsets.

The much-vaunted successor to privatisation is the Private Finance Initiative, under which public works are privately financed. Spending under the PFI will jump from £600m this year to £1.9bn next year.

The cost to the taxpayer is

postponed until the services derived from PFI contracts become available, but the bill will eventually be presented.

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costs of the lottery as a burden on the public sector pay bill. All pay policies have eventually collapsed, and it is unclear why this should deny that rule. There are further attempts to root out waste, and crude measures such as the imposition of the 12 per cent real cut running costs over the next three years.

So did Mr Clarke have his Budget in mind when he raised the subject of bikinis? As he said, when teasing the party faithful about tax cuts you might say that, I couldn't possibly comment.

More important, the curbs on public spending bear the hallmarks of a temporary rather than a permanent change. There is a pay policy – again one that dares not speak its name – in the form of a freeze on the public sector pay bill. All pay policies have eventually collapsed, and it is unclear why this should deny that rule. There are further attempts to root out waste, and crude measures such as the imposition of the 12 per cent real cut running costs over the next three years.

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## COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Arm Holdings (F)	305m (290m)	15.2m (9.2m)	40.0p (13.0p)	17.7p (16.5p)
Bass (F)	4.5bn (4.45bn)	565m (552m)	43.4p (40.1p)	22.7p (21.1p)
Barclaid (F)	402m (398m)	25.9m (-3.2m)	15.7p (-2.1p)	3p (3.5p)
Bell (F)	56.8m (51.2m)	14.2m (12.3m)	34.2p (29.7p)	12p (11.5p)
BTP (F)	169m (161m)	21.0m (18.1m)	9.07p (8.02p)	3.8p (3.5p)
Carlton Cossens (F)	1.5bn (1.4bn)	247m (190m)	65.3p (53.3p)	23.5p (21.65p)
Collects Group (F)	17.1m (14.2m)	-5.4m (4.6m)	-5.5p (-11p)	n/p (n/p)
Concord Group (F)	22.5m (21.9m)	4.78m (4.13m)	9.0p (7.2p)	3.6p (3.4p)
Express Int'l (F)	37.2m (38.3m)	5.0m (6.7m)	7.5p (	



# sport

## Samoa travel far for due respect

As the rugby union authorities in England and Scotland are more used to brickbats than bouquets, they may be pleased to know that in one faraway corner of the rugby world they are held up as paragons of far-sighted virtue.

Ever since they were cast adrift by the big unions of the southern hemisphere at the end of the World Cup, the Western Samoans have been engaged in a battle for their island's very survival as an international-playing country. Remember, only six months ago Samoa were World Cup quarter-finalists for the second time, which is more than could be said, for example, of Wales.

As it happens – and no thanks to the New Zealand and Australian Rugby Unions – they are winning the battle, and in propaganda terms they could scarcely have had a greater opportunity than the tour of Scotland and England, which will conclude with the Twickenham Test, a 78,000 sell-out, on Saturday week.

It is both poignant and pointed that the Western Samoa team have had to come half-way round the world to state their case, and a charitable view would be that a combination of the distance and the unfriendly weather has had its effect on an indifferent playing record including defeats by Cambridge University, the Midlands and North but lightened by the superb achievement in drawing with the Scots.

On the other hand, this would be to patronise the Samoans and, as this is their accusation against their nearest neighbours, they are happier to stand

**Steve Bale** on the island determined to remain part of international rugby union despite being cast adrift by its neighbours

or fall on their own considerable merits. "All I can do is express the gratitude we feel that we have been given this opportunity and that we are being accorded the full status of a worthy international opponent," Bryan Williams, coach and habitual front man, said.

"We would like other unions to give us the same respect but closer to home it's been a very slow process. I have taken my concerns to the New Zealand Rugby Union but I have to say their attitude is pretty patronising, even towards me. The All

'I have taken my concerns to the NZRU but their attitude is pretty patronising'

Blacks have never been to Samoa and neither have Australia, yet both Wales and Scotland have, and the very fact that we are here in England tends to reinforce the contrast in the way we are treated."

As Williams is one of the all-time great All Blacks, a phenomenally gifted wing of Samoan descent who illuminated the Seventies, the un-neighbourly negativity has been hard to take. And when the South African, Australian

and New Zealand unions got into bed with Rupert Murdoch with their £360m television deal announced on the eve of the World Cup final in June his very worst fears were realised.

Williams had warned that to exclude Samoa from the Sanza competition would be a death sentence to the national team, since the leading players would either sell themselves to rugby league or else play rugby union not only in Australia or New Zealand but for Australia or New Zealand.

After the World Cup six of the squad who had been in South Africa went to league and one to Japan.

The effect was felt not simply on Williams's squad but on the country itself, since according to the coach's often-repeated aphorism, "rugby to the Samoans is bread to butter, as shoes are to feet." Samoans are also profoundly religious people – the touring party holds prayer meetings most evenings and immediately before and after every match – and, without being flippan

try, you could say their prayers are being answered.

As the only defence then available, Williams tried to sign the Samoans up to the rival rugby circus proposed by Murdoch's broadcasting antagonist, Kerry Packer, and it was only after that pie-in-the-sky had crumbled that the Samoans at last had a piece of good fortune when he bumped into Michael Fay, the merchant banker and yachting buff whose money had

been behind New Zealand's America's Cup challenges.

"The Packer thing seemed to give us a lifeline when we were desperate and when it fell over some of the players decided they weren't going to wait around any longer. But then I happened to meet Michael at a function and when he said he enjoyed the rugby our team had

played I told him the problems we had.

"He invited me to see him, we had some discussions and things graduated from there so that we now have a package in place that secures the financial position of our players. It's only a beginning but I'm sure people would agree we deserved a bit of luck."

The next problem to solve is

regular international competition and Williams is immersed in establishing an annual Pan-Pacific competition involving the other island countries together with Argentina, America, Canada and Japan. More urgently, he had to put together a radically changed squad to make this tour in Scotland and England.

For a while there was concern that, whether through lack of finance or of adequate manpower, the Samoans might not make the trip. "There was a point when I was at my wits' end, but once we announced the Fay deal and there was the prospect of this Pan-Pacific tournament the players felt there was a future for Manu Samoa," Williams said.

"The difficulty is that when you lose players as we have you lose vital experience, the proven ability of players to perform in front of big crowds, to be away from home and play in foreign conditions. Saturday will bring them to Gloucester, and for a Samoan there could not be anything much more foreign than that."

Bryan Williams, the Western Samoa coach, is thankful for the encouragement received from the home unions

Photograph: Peter Jay

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**Hart finally appointed New Zealand coach**

John Hart, one of the coaches who bad-mouthed England during the 1991 World Cup, belatedly realised a lifetime's ambition yesterday when he was appointed New Zealand coach at the fourth time of applying, writes Steve Bale.

As it was also his 50th birthday, the former Auckland coach had a double cause for celebration, the main one being that this is a professional appointment which, according to reports which the new appointed

has denied, is worth up to a performance-related £86,000 a year.

"Rest assured it is not the figure that is being touted in the press," Hart said, although he declined to reveal the exact amount. "I guess I'm an adage that if you try, try again, you might finally get there."

His first task as successor to Laurie Mains, whom he has sometimes bitterly opposed, is to prepare the All Blacks for the most arduous year in their

history, including two Tests each against Australia and Scotland, one against Western Samoa and an extraordinary five against South Africa.

"If ever there was a reason not to stand, it was when I saw the itinerary, I guess that's part of the challenge," he said.

Among the other contenders was Maurice Trapp, the Englishman who succeeded Hart as Auckland coach in 1987 when the provincial side – for whom Hart played 26 times at

scrum-half in the late Sixties and early Seventies – were in the middle of the greatest period in their history.

Hart previously lost votes to become All Black coach to Alex Wyllie in 1988 and Mains in 1992 and a year ago, though he was a national selector from 1987-91 and was imposed on Wyllie as co-coach during the 1991 World Cup, when the relationship between the two was never better than extremely tense.

There will be 20 teams – four each from France, England and Wales, three each from Ireland and Scotland, and one from Italy. The 20th place will be decided by a play-off between the second Italian team and the top Romanian side. This is because of the extremely poor showing of Parul Constanta in this year's competition, and is an attempt to ensure that only strong teams qualify.

There are to be four pools of five teams, and each team will play two home and two away matches. The top team in each pool will progress to the semi-finals. The matches are all to be played by the end of November, to clear the path for the Five Nations Championship later in the season.

The North have made six changes to the side which beat Western Samoa for the Divisional Championship decider against the Midlands at Nottingham on Saturday.

The withdrawal of the full-back Tim Simpson, wing Jim Naylor and centre Will Greenwood for the England A game against Western Samoa has forced a reshuffle in the backs. Jim Mallinder moves from the wing to replace Simpson, with Sale's Chris Yates stepping in to make his debut and Austin Healey moving to the other wing from scrum-half.

Sale's Jos Baxendell makes his first senior appearance in place of Greenwood, while David Scully returns to scrum-half. The only forward change is at hooker, with Gary French coming in place of Tim Herbert, who is relegated to the bench.

Swansea became the first club to secure a European Cup semi-final place when they narrowly defeated the French club Castres 22-10 at St Hele's on Tuesday. The Welsh club, needing a six-point margin to win the pool, accumulated a 19-7 lead at the interval. Three Alasdair Williams penalties were fol-

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Swansea increased their lead to 22-7 with a fourth Williams penalty and then the replacement lock Guy Jeannard was sent off after being on the field for only two minutes.

However, this only served to motivate the French side and, after Savy kicked a penalty to cut the deficit to 12 points, it needed just a converted try to win the group with seven minutes remaining.

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# Stakes high in the high street betting contest

**Richard Edmondson** on how merger talk is worrying a punters' organisation

While Bass announced increased profits yesterday, many in racing were wondering what would be happening to their own funds. The brewers, owners of Coral, were widely reported this week to be considering making a take-over bid for Ladbrokes to create a bookmaking supergiant.

Any merger of the two betting organisations would mean a single company in control of almost a third of the nation's shops. It would also lead to switches among those on racing's shop floor.

Bass has refused to comment on the rumours, and there were some indications yesterday that the City's speculation has been wide of the mark. But if a takeover were to go ahead the 1,900 outlets of Ladbrokes and 930 of Coral would combine, and then, immediately, some of them would drop away. There will be no room for two shops of the same hue in the high streets, and where the two firms clash, uniforms would have soon been requested for return.

Even on a general level, the reduction of competition appears no great boon to the reg-

ular书maker and, specifically, the National Association for the Protection of Punters believes

they are being watched by their

superiors. The bookmakers believe pressure is already viewed with some suspicion. A pooling of the Coral and Ladbrokes stake in SIS would create a single, strong sphere of influence.

Recent movements have also

confirmed a NAPP suggestion

that the act of betting would

soon be witnessed in a different

location. "We have been specu-

lating how long it would be be-

fore betting terminals were

allowed in pubs and clubs,"

High said. "And with Bass's con-

nections in that area it is bound

to be sooner rather than later.

"That would require quite a

switch but if that legislation

comes in we believe it will,

it would put Bass in an almost

unassassable position. In general,

this wouldn't be healthy for

competition at all. It will be a

restriction of choice and only

those bets that Coral feel are ap-

propriate would be offered."

In general, it would also be

bad for racing's coffers. While

a closure of certain shops

should mean punters relocating

themselves in the nearest alter-

native, it may not be as sim-

ple as that.

The advent of Camelot has shown that horse players need only the slightest excuse to have their attention switched to a load of jiggling balls. The removal of a favourite corner in a favourite shop could also mean the removal of punters from the sport. Those who monitor turnover and levy would soon let us know of such an eventuality.

If there is a winner in all this (outside the boardroom and heavy share investors) it may be among the embittered Cork's Drift ranks of the shop owner who has seen the lottery take over from the Big Three as the *beau temps*.

Fewer players may be sooner rather than later.

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# sport

## There is something quite honourable and moving in the spectacle of two opponents retiring with honours even

It wasn't easy to notice it amid all the noisy and well-deserved tributes to Mike Atherton's great innings in Johannesburg on Monday, but those nail-biting fifth-day heroics also represented a triumph for an even more reticent creature: the draw. Cricket, once the subject of endless mockery for its frequent failure to deliver clear-cut results, has in recent times absorbed the win-loss culture that dominates modern sport.

Television, dominated by impatient Americans and Australians, is devoted to the stark contrast between victors and vanquished: it prefers a penalty shoot-out to a handshake - it likes to cut between laughter and tears. And one-day cricket, which insists on a winner

even if it has to resort to some crazy arithmetic to find one, seems to have entered the bloodstream of the modern player. But what Atherton's innings proved was that a draw can be the best - the most dramatic and resonant - result of all. He himself said as much in a post-match soundbite.

It is, on the face of it, ironic. According to the normal criteria for sporting thrills, Monday in Johannesburg was a day of unremitting tedium. Nothing about it could have been captured by a programme of highlights, because there weren't any. England scored a measly 186 runs (two per over), only one wicket fell. Maiden followed maiden in a dumb procession. For the casual spectator,

counting down the overs must have seemed about as exciting as a chug-past of empty freight cars. But for fans it was a day of slow-burning drama. Every over represented a steady blunting of South Africa's hopes and nerves. As England prodded their way to safety, you could see shoulders sag in the outfield; when Brian McMillan started moulting curses at Jack Russell as he scurried about the crease like, well, a Jack Russell, it was hard to stifle a cheer.

It was only a draw, but as many armchair fans in chilly England were quick to say, in its way it was better than a win. We shouldn't be surprised by this. Some of the greatest games in recent memory have been draws. One thinks of



ROBERT WINDER

Graham Gooch's grand match at Lord's when he scored 333 against India. Mohammad Azharuddin replied with a dashing century of his own and Kapil Dev took four consecutive stosses to save the follow-on. Then, of course, there is the cele-

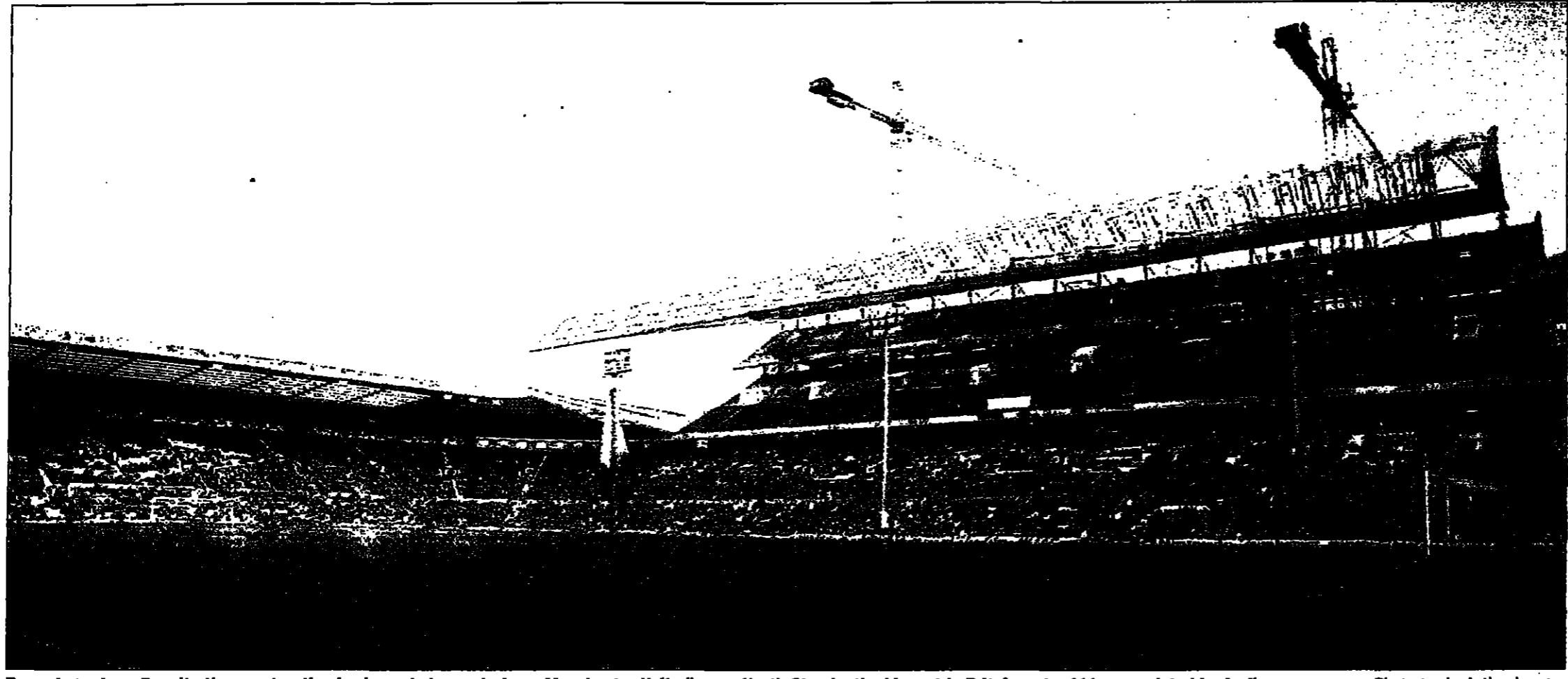
brated tied Test, which exists now as a piece of grainy footage showing West Indians spinning about like pinballs to secure a match-saving run-out on the final ball. One thinks of Cowdrey hobbling out for the last over with a broken arm, or of Gavaskar astounding history by scoring 221 to bring India to within an inch of an improbable last-mans target of 438. What could be more winning than this?

There are many other examples. Yet the draw continues to strike many people as a soft option, an infuriatingly inconclusive waste of time. Americans famously dislike football because of its enthusiasm for low-scoring draws, which must indeed seem pointless to a mentality that assumes the only

to the wire by keeping alive both teams' hopes of a win; even not-so-close ones, like this week's, give the losing team something to fight for. So it is a shame that the draw has become something of an endangered species. In recent years it has become a rare beast. The bald figures are startling: in the 70 Tests before this tour England drew just 19. In the 70 before that England drew 46.

Atherton's 'finest hour' stand in Johannesburg reminds us that a stand-off can be every bit as satisfying as a victory, but also (witness the shell-shocked look on Hansie Cronje's face afterwards) just as mortifying as a thrashing. It was, as they say, right out of the top draw.

Ken Jones is on holiday



Dreaming spires: Despite the construction having only begun in June, Manchester United's new North Stand - the biggest in Britain - should be completed by April

Photograph: Action Images

## United remodel their theatre of dreams

There is one thing that you can be sure of when you talk about Old Trafford's new North Stand: it is going to end in tiers. Three to be precise, a massive 26,000-seater monument to the enduring popularity of Manchester United.

Walk into the ground and the sheer size of the thing hits you. Even in an age where the breath is regularly taken away by spectator areas such as at Elland Road, Anfield and St James' Park, this is a gargantuan structure, reaching high into the old Trafford Park docklands sky.

It dominates the theatre of dreams, at 3,600 tons looming twice the size of the existing structures - and Old Trafford was hardly a tin-pot shambles with rickety old sheds to stand under to start with. When it is complete - and the estimates are for April - some 55,300 people will be creating a noise redolent of the terrace era in support of Eric Cantona and co.

"Even though I'd seen the drawings and been involved throughout the planning stages, it surprises even me," Martin Edwards, United's chief executive, said about the stand that will be the biggest in Britain. "It's an impressive structure."

So is the speed with which the North Stand is being erected. Work began only in June and by last Saturday's match against Chelsea, the bottom tier - the equivalent of the previous cantilever stand built for the 1966 World Cup - was occupied for the first time.

Already the capacity is nudging the "sorry, no more seats" numbers of last year and the undertaking to have at least that number ready for the European Championship has been com-

pleted six months ahead of schedule.

"The simple problem was of demand," Edwards continued. "We had a beautiful concentric ground with all the stands the same size, but we couldn't fit in everyone who wanted to watch Manchester United. We had 123,000 members last year, most of whom wanted to come

to Old Trafford several times a season. With a capacity of little more than 43,000, it meant we were turning thousands of people away. In those circumstances, the economics dictated we couldn't let the shape of the ground dictate what we did."

Ah, the economics. United have been accused of worrying

more about pennies in the till than goals in the net, but they can hardly be accused of stinting. The North Stand is going to cost around £19m, which when you include the £9m to buy the land it stands on makes the total cost more than £100m.

"We've estimated we are going to need to fill Old Traf-

ford 100 times before the stand is paid for, which means five seasons if we're lucky," Edwards said. "We're usually close to capacity for League games, but we don't always sell out for Coca-Cola Cup ties and European matches."

The stand will also provide the centrepiece for events beyond United's matches, including European club finals. It would be natural to host more FA Cup semi-finals there, too, while rugby league, which

already uses the ground for internationals, will scarcely be deterred by an increase of 12,000 in potential ticket sales.

Indeed, the single biggest reason why the new national stadium is unlikely to be built in the east of the city is rising in the banks of the Manchester Ship Canal.

How big can Old Trafford get? Peter Beatty, joint managing director of Hillstone Laurie, the construction consultants for the North Stand, believes that is a matter of technological advance and Manchester United's determination. "At the moment, the next stand most capable of expansion is the old Stretford End," he said, "but that was rebuilt only a couple of years ago and the club is unlikely to want to knock it down for a few years yet."

A railway line runs to the south, while police would be loath to let United expand to the east on to what is the main course into the stadium. "As structural engineers, we regard these problems as a challenge," Beatty said. "They said it wouldn't be possible to build a stand on the north side because of an access road, but we've managed it. In fact, it's a matter of some pride that the building has gone on without that road ever having to close."

With Carl Tiler now at Aston Villa, Alf Inge-Haaland is Cooper's likely replacement as their thin squad is stretched yet further. Any new players would have to be signed by 15 January to be eligible for the rest of the competition but there is little money available.

Although Clark has brought in almost £10m with the sales of Stan Collymore, Tiler and Lars Bohinen, more than half has gone in various deductions and on Kevin Campbell and Andrea Silenzi - neither of whom can make the first team. The rest is helping to pay off Forest's multi-million pound debt. However, each tie realises £500,000 and the same amount is in limbo awaiting the Premier League's ruling on Collymore's claim to a cut of his transfer fee.

Should Forest draw the likes of Milan the emphasis, once more, is likely to be on defense.

It is almost eight hours since they conceded a goal in Europe and Cooper said: "The way we play has been ideally suited to it. Teams have put us under a lot of pressure but we do not allow them to get behind us because we play fairly deep. They can play some nice football but they cannot play one-two behind us."

"We are like everyone else, we would love to win three or four nil, but it does not matter in the end as long as you get through."

Forest's progress has already helped Steve Stone enter the England squad and it may yet earn Cooper a recall. The central defender played two Umbro Cup matches during which England conceded six goals. On both occasions the back four was experimental and it showed.

Cooper said: "You can look at it from that point of view but I am sure there is many an established international who came in because of injuries and took his chance. I thought I did reasonably well and Terry Venables did say players from teams who stayed in Europe will come to the forefront of his thoughts. I would love to be in next summer's championships."



### Capacity of Premier League grounds

Premier League Club	Capacity	Capacity of largest stand
Manchester United	55,000* approx	North Stand: 26,000 approx
Aston Villa	39,400	Holt End: 13,500 approx
Leeds United	40,204	East Stand: 14,990
Liverpool	41,352	The Kop: 12,681
Arsenal	38,755	North Bank: 12,400
Newcastle United	36,610	Exhibition Stand: 11,955
Chelsea	31,554	East Stand: 11,322
Sheffield Wednesday	36,000 (40,000)*	Spion Kop: 11,000
Manchester City	32,000	The Kippax: 11,000
Middlesbrough	30,000	East Stand: 10,315
Nottingham Forest	30,500	Executive Stand: 10,037
Tottenham Hotspur	33,000	East Stand: 10,000
Blackburn Rovers	31,567	Rock Waller Stand: 11,000
Wimbledon	26,000	Homesdale Road Stand: 8,500
West Ham United	26,014	West Stand: 8,000
Everton	40,000 approx	Goodays St Thomas: 8,000
Southampton	15,000	West Stand: approx 6,500
Coventry	23,500	Main Stand: approx 6,000
Queens Park Rangers	19,000	Emm Lane Stand: 4,842
Bolton Wanderers	22,618	Manchester Rd Stand: 3,520

\* on completion of work

## Magic moments in diaries of the unexpected

Everything is now geared towards 25 December, yet it is the events of 25 January that resonate through the pages of the year's most riveting football reads.

Eric Cantona did not, alas,

keep a diary giving his version of that fateful night at Crystal Palace or its aftermath. Alex Ferguson did, and *A Year in the Life* (Virgin, £12.99) reveals how the Manchester United manager was torn between the instinct to defend Cantona and a realisation that he was indefensible.

Amazingly, Ferguson was still unsure what had happened when he arrived home to learn that Cantona had "karate-kicked the guy". Too sick at heart to watch a recording, he went to bed, but could not sleep. "At 5.25am I got up and put the video on. I couldn't believe what I saw."

It is testimony to Ferguson's candour and the editing skills of Peter Ball that the tempo does not falter either side of Selhurst Park. The inside story of Andy Cole's £7m signing is fascinating - Ferguson then considered him better value

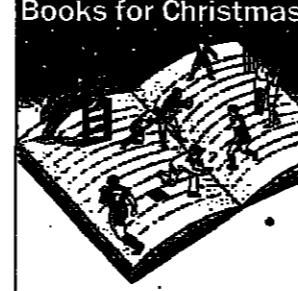
than Les Ferdinand - while he pulls no punches about Blackburn's shortcomings.

The extent to which *l'affaire Cantona* dominated a season brimming with big stories is evident from another diary, by the Charlton striker Garry Nelson.

At one point, Fry tells a player Sullivan wants him out. Brady insists the owner said no such thing, forcing the manager to backtrack. Later, she turns to Fry saying: "I can't believe you did that." The Arthur Daley of football replies: "Yeah, Kazza, it was a bit of a kick in the bollocks, wasn't it?"

Which brings us back to a certain Frenchman. Ian Ridley's *Cantona: The Red and the Black* (Gollancz, £14.99) is an intelligent and critical study of a life and a career. The book is "unauthorised" and better for it. Ridley shedding far more light on the complex character he calls "part Rambo, part Rimbaud" than Cantona did in his self-justifying autobiography.

Gary McAllister stays on the fence about Cantona's time at Leeds in *Captain's Log* (Mainstream, £14.99). The Scotland skipper does, however, quote one manager (sadly anonymous) who derided Cantona as "a poor man's Joe Jordan". He is also more forthcoming about how, but for Brian Clough's beligerence, he might now be leading Nottingham Forest.



As a study of a folk hero, David Instone's *The Bully Years* (Thomas Publications, £8.99) is short on controversy (apart from Steve Bull's ongoing feud with Leicester's Steve Walsh) but long on goals. All the 250-plus Bull has scored for Wolves are described, and it is a tribute to the author that he turns so many knock-ins into a dramatic litany.

Vying with the diary for popularity of the year is the oral history.

*Kicking and Screaming*, by Roger Taylor and Andrew Ward (Robson, £16.95), is recommended especially to anyone who forgot to video the BBC2 series while watching *Cracker*. Memories and myths trace a national obsession from the days when a pair of boots had to last years through the Brycemeen Boys to today's millionaire players and their agents.

Stephen Walsh's *Voices of the Old Firm* (Mainstream, £14.99) performs a similar role in recording eye-witness accounts, laced with acid Glaswegian wit, of the past 50 years of Rangers and Celtic. It is a tale of devotion, rivalry and bigotry - and that's just the players.

Tom Watt must also have been up to his spectacles in interview tapes. Curiously, *A Passion for the Game: Real Lives in Football* (Mainstream, £14.99) coaxes more "real" experience from stewards, kit men and press-box assistants than from the likes of Ron Atkinson and Robert Chase.

My favourite involves the PA announcer at Liverpool.

Annoyed by the famouy man who gave details of a car to be moved as Tommy Smith was about to take a penalty, George Sephton wrote in pleading "Gissajob". They did, but he froze at his first game.

"All my mates are down there in the crowd. I've either got to get on and do this or pack my bags and emigrate." He survived, and is still going strong, but the next day: "I was in my car, driving through Bootle, and I stopped and just cried for 20 minutes. My nervous system was shredded."

As teams go by, the heavyweight club histories get bigger and better. No one does navel-gazing as expertly as Breeden, whose latest batch include books on Blackburn, Bolton, Derby (a pictorial record) and a timely paean to Middlesbrough's past, *Ayresome Park Memories*, by Eric Paylor and John Wilson (all £14.99). Meanwhile, the *Breeden Book of Scottish Football Records* (£14.99), edited by Peter G. Chalcut's *Hamlyn Guide to Football Collectables* (£12.99) may have a similar appeal. An illustrated buyers' guide to memorabilia, it is a treasure trove of shirts, caps, trophies, medals, works of art, records, books, stamps, programmes, cigarette cards et al. What price Cantona's old Bruce Lee posters?

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# Ferguson is ready to play again

## Football

RUPERT METCALF

The Duncan Ferguson comeback begins tonight. The Everton and Scotland striker, who was released from Glasgow's Barlinnie prison last month after serving 44 days of a three-month sentence imposed for head-butting an opponent while playing for Rangers, has his 12-match playing ban suspended by a judge yesterday.

Tonight Ferguson will play for Everton's reserve team against their counterparts from Newcastle United, in a hurriedly arranged Pontins League fixture. "There'll be 15,000 to 20,000 people there - that's how influential Duncan is on Merseyside," his team-mate, Dave Watson, said. "If he comes through, he's got a chance for Monday," when Everton entertain West Ham in a televised Premiership game.

Yesterday, at the Court of Session in Edinburgh, Lord Prosser ruled that a judicial review into the 12-match ban imposed by the Scottish Football Association should take place. The suspension, which still has seven games to run, has been lifted until the judicial review is completed.

"We feel he has been doubly punished," the Everton secretary, Michael Dunford, said. "We don't think a custodial sentence was appropriate, but that was what the court adjudged and we have to respect that. Ferguson had the suspension imposed by the SFA following an incident in April 1994, when he butted a Raith Rovers defender, John McStay. It was upheld by an appeals tribunal last month."

Ferguson sat out one match for Rangers before the ban was put on hold pending the court hearing. After joining Everton last season, he played in the first two matches of this term before needing a hernia operation. Everton's last four

fixtures have counted towards the suspension.

While Ferguson served time for his on-field misdemeanours, Paul Gascoigne has escaped the same fate. Neither the England midfielder nor his Rangers team-mates John Brown and Alan McLaren - nor Billy Dodds of Aberdeen - will be prosecuted for their involvement in various ugly incidents during a Scottish Premier Division match at Ibrox last month. Glasgow's Procurator Fiscal said last night he had considered a police report on the match and had decided "to take no proceedings against any person on this occasion."

Another relieved man is the Aberdeen defender, Stewart McKinnie, who will not face legal action after an alleged elbowing offence for which he was sent off at Partick last Saturday.

The Republic of Ireland will have more fans on their side at Wednesday's European Championship qualifying play-off against the Netherlands at Anfield. The Dutch FA has taken up only 11,000 of its 16,500 allocation, and the surplus will now go to the Irish, who should have more than 22,000 people cheering them on. Roy Keane is unlikely to be playing in a green shirt, however. The Manchester United midfielder, recovering from a hernia operation, was not deemed fit enough to play in a reserve match last night.

The FA has charged Birmingham City with misconduct following crowd trouble at last month's First Division match against Millwall. If found guilty, City could face a fine, a suspended sentence - or, even the closure of St Andrew's.

Birmingham expect to complete the £200,000 signing of Barcelona's Danish striker, Ronnie Ekelund, today, while a one deal to go through yesterday saw Bolton Wanderers buy the Plymouth Argyle midfielder Wayne Burnett, who has been on loan at Bury for two months, for £100,000.



Flowing move: Pete Sampras attends to a nosebleed during his match in Munich yesterday

Photograph: Reuter

## Sampras enjoys easy passage

### Tennis

Pete Sampras, the world No 1, earned \$762,500 (£508,000) for a day's work when he cruised to a 6-1, 7-6 first-round victory over his American compatriot Patrick McEnroe at the Grand Slam Cup yesterday.

Sampras, who guided the United States to their Davis Cup triumph last weekend despite an attack of cramp, can increase his earnings in the world's richest tennis event to \$2.12m by winning the cup.

The Wimbledon champion won the first set against McEnroe with ease. Although his form slipped slightly in the second, Sampras used his big serve to maximum effect on the fast indoor surface to take the tie-break 7-1. In fact, Sampras had more trouble with a nosebleed than with his opponent.

There are no rankings points at stake at the Munich tournament, which brings together the 16 best performers from the four Grand Slams - Wimbledon and the US, French and Australian Opens.

However, the huge amounts of money on offer persuade many players to postpone their end-of-year holidays following last month's ATP Tour world championship. Sampras has earned a bonus of \$500,000 just for turning up in Munich after victories at Wimbledon and the US Open. The losers in the quarter-finals - the next round for Sampras - are guaranteed \$262,500, while the eventual winner's prize is \$1.625m.

But the American admitted afterwards that he had no major expectations from the tournament after the energy-sapping Davis Cup victory against Russia. "I still feel tired, mentally and physically," Sampras said. "I have no great expectations here. I have come here thinking: 'If I can play well, then good. If not, then I'll go home and it's been a good year.'

In the quarter-finals, Sampras will play another big server, Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia.

The American Todd Martin booked his place in the quarter-finals with a 7-6, 6-4 victory over Spain's former French Open champion, Sergi Bruguera.

## Referees are cock-a-hoop

### Basketball

After being locked out for more than two months, the National Basketball Association's regular referees may be officiating games as soon as Monday. Although their new agreement with the league has yet to be completed, the referees will be undergoing physical tests and a brief refresher course on the rules this week.

By the narrowest of margins, 27-26, the referees voted on Monday to accept a contract offer from the league that was, however, less lucrative than what they had wanted. Gone will be the replacement officials, most of whom came from the Continental Basketball Association. Most players are pleased.

The league has claimed the

rises would make NBA officials the highest paid in sport, but the referees said they would not.

The San Antonio Spurs signed All-Star center David Robinson to a new contract that will keep him with them the rest of his career.

The Spurs and David Robinson have come to an agreement on a multi-year contract - a new multi-year contract - that allows David Robinson to be a Spur for life," the Spurs' general manager, Gregg Popovich, said. He would not reveal terms of the agreement, but he did confirm that as long as Robinson played in the NBA it would be for the Spurs.

Robinson, 30, in his seventh NBA season, last year was the league's Most Valuable Player Award winner.

Hendry was only 51 points in front in the last frame, with four reds left on the table, when Drago, who had missed an easy pink, conceded.

Hendry said later: "I'm finding it difficult to get psych'd up for this tournament as I was in the UK championship. However, I had to slow down the pace to keep Tony away from the table for long periods. He became very nervous because of it."

Hendry lost three of the first four frames and admitted: "I couldn't afford to let Tony get any further ahead. It was vital for me to win the fifth frame."

That is exactly what the newly-crowned UK champion did, and breaks of 79, 72 and 56 carried him through to the last

### Snooper

Stephen Hendry, the world champion, came from behind to record his 14th successive victory in the second round of the UK championship. He is a hot favourite to win in Frankfurt yesterday.

The Scot made a second-frame break of 126 on his way to a 5-3 win over Malta's Tony Drago, who now faces Rod Lawler, a 24-year-old from Liverpool, in tonight's quarter-final.

Hendry lost three of the first four frames and admitted: "I couldn't afford to let Tony get any further ahead. It was vital for me to win the fifth frame."

That is exactly what the newly-crowned UK champion did, and breaks of 79, 72 and 56 carried him through to the last

### Peter Graf's personal appeal

his daughter's earnings when he acted as her manager.

Peter Wechsung, the chief prosecutor, said that Peter Graf filed a request yesterday saying he wanted to give an extensive explanation of his position.

Steffi Graf also remains under investigation in the case, as does the family tax adviser, Joachim Eckardt, who was arrested in September, and is also being treated as being at risk of fleeing.

Steffi Graf has already been arrested DM20m (£9m) to cover taxes investigators believe may have been evaded.

## Unpaid Hadley leaves Widnes

### Rugby League

DAVE HADFIELD

The Welsh rugby union and league international winger, Adrian Hadley, has walked out on Widnes, saying he will never play for them again.

Hadley, like a number of Widnes players, is owed money and said: "Widnes haven't honoured my contract and I'm not prepared to accept the situation any longer. I have played my last match for them."

Hadley, who is recovering from a knee injury, joined Widnes from Salford three years ago and has been linked with a return to his old code at the age of 32. But he says that he has had no approaches and may retire.

Kevin Ellis, yet another Welshman, has offered his services to his former club,

### SPORTING DIGEST

#### Basketball

AMERICAN EXPRESS EUROPEAN WOMEN'S TOUR 1995: May 7-12: Welsh Open (St Pierre, Paris); 13-17: LA Open; 18-25: Prague, 1st; 26-30: Amsterdam; 31: Toronto; 32: Orlando; 33-35: Copenhagen.

FRONTIER: 1st: St. Petersburg (Russia); 2nd: Copenhagen (Denmark); 3rd: Prague (Czech Republic); 4th: Copenhagen (Denmark); 5th: Prague (Czech Republic); 6th: Copenhagen (Denmark); 7th: Prague (Czech Republic); 8th: Copenhagen (Denmark); 9th: Prague (Czech Republic); 10th: Copenhagen (Denmark); 11th: Prague (Czech Republic); 12th: Copenhagen (Denmark); 13th: Prague (Czech Republic); 14th: Copenhagen (Denmark); 15th: Prague (Czech Republic); 16th: Copenhagen (Denmark); 17th: Prague (Czech Republic); 18th: Copenhagen (Denmark); 19th: Prague (Czech Republic); 20th: Copenhagen (Denmark); 21st: Prague (Czech Republic); 22nd: Copenhagen (Denmark); 23rd: Prague (Czech Republic); 24th: Copenhagen (Denmark); 25th: Prague (Czech Republic); 26th: Copenhagen (Denmark); 27th: Prague (Czech Republic); 28th: Copenhagen (Denmark); 29th: Prague (Czech Republic); 30th: Copenhagen (Denmark); 31st: Prague (Czech Republic); 32nd: Copenhagen (Denmark); 33rd: Prague (Czech Republic); 34th: Copenhagen (Denmark); 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